Do physical activity guidelines include fall prevention?

Associate Professor Anne Tiedemann

Institute for Musculoskeletal Health
School of Public Health
The University of Sydney
Physical activity guidelines - all contain recommendations for older adults (65+ years)

Australian Guidelines
Published 2012

WHO Guidelines
Published 2011

US Guidelines
Published 2018

UK Guidelines
Published 2019
Do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and greater intensity and that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.

Australian Guidelines: Older people should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.
Guidelines regarding fall prevention

**WHO Guidelines:** Older adults, with poor mobility, should perform physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls on 3 or more days per week.

**Australian Guidelines:** Older people should be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities that incorporate fitness, strength, balance and flexibility.

**US Guidelines:** As part of their weekly physical activity, older adults should do multicomponent physical activity that includes balance training as well as aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.

**UK Guidelines:** Older adults should maintain or improve their physical function by undertaking activities aimed at improving or maintaining muscle strength, balance and flexibility on at least two days a week. These could be combined with sessions involving moderate aerobic activity or could be additional sessions aimed specifically at these components of fitness.
WHO guidelines: “In older adults with poor mobility, there is consistent evidence that regular physical activity is safe and reduces risk of falls by nearly 30%. For prevention of falls, most evidence supports a physical activity pattern of balance training and moderate-intensity muscle-strengthening activities three times per week. There is no evidence that planned physical activity reduces falls in adults and older adults who are not at risk of falls.”

Australian guidelines: “These activities will improve your balance and help to prevent falls. Make a specific time each day to do these exercises, or fit them in whenever you can – for example – while waiting for the kettle to boil.” Examples given - one leg stand, heel raises.

US guidelines: “These kinds of activities can improve the ability to resist forces within or outside of the body that cause falls while a person is stationary or moving. Walking backward, standing on one leg, or using a wobble board are examples of balance activities. Strengthening muscles of the back, abdomen, and legs also improves balance.

It is important to note that doing only low-intensity walking does not seem to reduce the risk of fall-related injuries and fractures.”

UK guidelines: “Balance training involves a combination of movements that challenge balance and reduce the likelihood of falling.”
How could PA guidelines be improved with regard to balance training?

Provide clarity regarding:

- What balance training means
- What intensity
- Weekly dose/ dose response
- Who can benefit
- Importance
**Physical Activity for Disabled Adults**

Make it a daily habit

- Improves mental health and quality of life
- Makes maintaining a healthy weight easier
- Creates opportunities to meet new people and feel part of the community
- Makes daily tasks easier and increases independence
- Helps to prevent chronic disease
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Improves mobility and balance
- Improves fitness

**Disabled adults**

- Physical activity makes you feel good
  - Give things a go and enjoy what you do
- Being inactive is harmful to health
  - Even a little movement is better than nothing

**Don't be still for too long**

**Do strength and balance activities on at least two days per week**

**For substantial health gains aim for at least 150 minutes each week of moderate intensity activity**

**Remember the talk test:**

- Can talk, but not sing = moderate intensity activity
- Difficulty talking without pausing = vigorous intensity activity

UK Chief Medical Officers’ Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019