

IMPACT



Franklin County, 561 West Oneida, Preston, ID 83263; 208-852-1097; Fax: 208-852-2812

Exercise Program Strengthens Older Adults in Franklin County

The Situation

Approximately one-third of older adults, age 65 or older, fall each year. Of those who fall, one third suffers very serious or life threatening injuries, including hip fractures. After the first fall, older adults are more likely to fall again. While there are many causes of falling, perhaps the most controllable factor is the decrease in and lack of physical activity as people age. Less or lack of physical activity results in loss of muscle mass, muscle weakness, and balance problems, ultimately limiting a person's functional capability.

Our Response

In October 2004, Fit and Fall Proof, a six-week exercise program, began in Franklin County. The class met twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one hour. The exercise program consisted of four parts: endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. This program was offered three additional times in January/February, April/May, and September/October of 2005.

Many organizations helped to make this program a success. The Idaho Department of Health provided training, materials, and supplies. The Franklin County Senior Citizens Center provided a location to hold the classes. Initially, a physical therapist from the Franklin County Medical Center and extension educator from the University of Idaho Extension took turns teaching the bi-weekly classes. Later, other community members also assisted in teaching the classes.

Program Outcomes

To measure impact, each participant was given a Three-Meter Timed Up and Go Test at the beginning and end of each six-week exercise program. The Three-Meter Timed Up and Go Test starts with participants sitting down in a chair. They are timed as they stand up, walk around a cone, which is three meters away, and then return to the chair and sit down.

The length of time it takes participants to complete this test has been found to be indicative of a participant's balance, gait speed, functional capacity for household and community mobility, and risk of falling. Scoring is as follows: <10 seconds: participants are freely mobile with a low fall risk, 10-19 seconds: participants are mostly independent with a moderate fall risk, 20-29 seconds: participants functional abilities vary with high risk of falling, ≥30 seconds: participants are mostly dependent with very high risk of falling.

A t-test was used to compare the pre and post Three-Meter Timed Up and Go Test scores of participants. Participants average post-test scores (7.44 seconds) were significantly lower than their average pre-test scores (8.99 seconds) ($p < 0.00$).

For More Information

Laura L. Sant, MS, RD, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension—Franklin County
561 West Oneida
Preston, ID 83263

208-852-1097
Fax: 208-852-2812
Email: lsant@uidaho.edu

59-05lsant-exercise.doc
12/05