

Strength training might help prevent seniors' falls

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(HealthDay)—Older people are at higher risk for fall-related injuries because bone density and muscle mass diminish over time. But regular exercise can help keep them on their feet, research suggests.

More than 800 Americans break a hip each day, usually because of a fall, said Dr. Christopher Sciamanna, an internist at Penn State Hershey Medical Center.

Injuries incurred from a fall often require surgery, physical therapy and medication. Often, seniors lose their ability to walk and stay independent, Sciamanna said.

He believes that many [older people](#) could avoid these costly and challenging issues if the medical community's focus shifted from fall treatment to fall prevention.

"You can either make your bones stronger by taking drugs, or you can make yourself less likely to fall by exercise. Or you could do both,"

Sciamanna said in a Penn State news release.

Walking and other aerobic activities can boost heart health. Strength-training programs can also help older people gain muscle mass and improve their balance, Sciamanna explained.

It doesn't matter whether you go to a gym and work with weight machines or stay home and use resistance bands or other equipment. What matters most is that the exercise works different body parts, and that it's progressive, he added.

"Strength training is progressive," Sciamanna said. "If you never change the resistance, you'll never get much stronger."

Previous studies suggest that older people who participate in strength-training sessions could gain three more pounds of muscle each year than those who don't engage in this type of [exercise](#), he pointed out.

Even people in their 80s can increase their [muscle strength](#) by up to 100 percent after one year of strength-training with gradually increasing resistance, Sciamanna added.

More information: The U.S. National Institutes of Health has more on [fall prevention](#) for older adults.

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