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# HEALTHY HERALD

## Frailty as a Predictor of Nursing Home Placement



### PT Corner

**Carol Hollenbeck,  
PT, DPT, CEEAA**

Our population is aging due to a longer life span and the “age wave” - aging baby boomers. By the year 2030, 20% of the U.S. population will be older adults—over the age of 64. In 2000 only 12% were older adults. Trying to delay placement into a nursing home or avoidance altogether is what most people want, but it is also essential for the viability of these deteriorating institutions.

The risk factors associated with nursing home placement for adults without dementia are diabetes, incontinence, stroke, and difficulties with daily activities (bathing, dressing, grooming, transferring, eating and toileting). If you can keep your legs strong, you can decrease your risk significantly. In the past I wrote an article about decreased leg strength begin the #1 predictor for nursing home placement. Recent research supports this claim. Frailty is defined as being physically weak with little hope of improving. Frailty is now defined as an official medical syndrome

which can be treated.

We lose strength in our muscles (sarcopenia) at a rate of 3-5% per decade after age 30. Beginning in our 60’s this process increases due primarily to inactivity and if not reversed can lead to frailty. A simple test for leg strength is to count how many times you can stand up from a standard chair (17”) without using your arms. Minimally men should be able to do 5 and women 2 will into their 90’s.

Exercise, specifically strength training, and being active are the primary treatments for sarcopenia and decreasing the risk for frailty. In as little as 2 weeks neuromuscular changes are occurring in your body to help the body regain strength. Intensity, frequency and type of exercise are all important parameters to keep in mind when beginning a program. Most research has shown that muscle strengthening exercises ideally should be done 2-3 times per week. More than that and you

Using weight machines at a gym is the best place to get started with some instruction by a qualified personal trainer if you are new to exercising. You may also use free weights (dumbbells), resistance bands and your body weight. Try to do 10-12 reps of each exercise at a “comfortably hard” level. If you can easily do more reps, the weight is not high enough and you won’t get the strengthening benefit. Eventually you’ll reach a maintenance level as you won’t want to indefinitely increase the weights. As few as 6-8 exercises can target all the main muscle groups, however you may do more if it is something you enjoy :-)

It’s pretty simple—if you don’t keep your strength, you’re going to lose your independence and may be at risk for frailty and subsequent placement in a nursing home.

## TIP FROM A TRAINER by Randi Krueger

### Staying Fit While Traveling

Staying on track with your fitness can be especially tough while traveling. If you travel for work, hotel gyms can be helpful, but often lacking in options. If you’re on holiday, you may not have access to a gym or classes. In both cases, eating right is a challenge while on vacation or when on a tight schedule at a convention. Planning ahead is critical for maintaining a routine

while on the road. Technology is a great tool! There are apps that will find health and beauty services near your location, allow you to book and pay online, and save places you liked so you can visit again. Arriving with a plan goes a long way to helping you achieve your goals.

Take your own snacks! Trail mix, dried fruits and granola bars are easy to transport and much better for you than the chips you’ll get on the plane.

When you arrive, check out local options and eat what is in season where you are. Your body will adjust better and you won’t waste calories on a quick grab at the convenience store.

When researching your next trip, find local options. Get outside when possible. Switch it up—try new things! Think of new studios/gyms as part of your exploration. It’s a great way to stay committed to your goals and health.

