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Balancing Act: Preventing Falls in Older Adults

by Michelle Matte, MSED, CSCS

I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up

As the human body ages, physiological changes are inevitable. Once you pass your reproductive prime, chemical changes occur that lead to decreased muscle mass, diminished bone density and reduced joint range of motion. Cumulatively, these changes can greatly increase your risk of falling. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries in older adults. However, a well designed exercise program can slow physical decline and mitigate the risk of falls. For fitness professionals working with older adults, understanding the underlying components that contribute to postural instability is essential.

Standing Tall

A primary contributor to unstable balance is poor posture. Typically, your standing posture is the cumulative result of years of bad habits and unbalanced activity. A golfer or tennis player may develop scoliosis over time due to repeatedly using one side of the body differently than the other side. Individuals who spend long hours at a desk may develop kyphosis, where the shoulders become hunched forward. Any misalignment of the spine shifts your center of gravity, making it harder to maintain stability, and increasing your risk of falling. A 2012 study of older adults published in "Gait and Posture" associated the ability to control balance while standing on a compliant surface with a high degree of reduced fall risk.



Strong and Supple

Imbalanced muscular tension at the joints is the underlying cause of postural misalignment. Weak muscles combined with inelastic muscle and connective tissue cause the skeleton to deviate from its neutral anatomical position, creating instability. Once an older adult has fallen, especially if injury has occurred, fear of falling can greatly increase the risk of a recurrent episode. According to researchers at Brunel University's Centre for Sports Medicine and Human Performance, heightened anxiety can cause "stiffening" behaviors when an individual senses a falling threat. This in turn can lead to reduced movement efficiency in performing functional tasks, with the result of reduced stability and increased risk of injury.

Slow and Steady

Fitness professionals should adopt a three-pronged approach to programming for older adults. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, or ACSM, your exercise regimen should include two to three sessions of resistance training on non-consecutive days of the week, performing one to three sets of 10 to 15 repetitions of exercises for all major muscle groups. Flexibility training for all the joints should be performed on at least five days per week, and balance training that focuses on functional movement and performance should be an intrinsic part of your training protocol. You will have to make allowances for structurally altered posture in some individuals. You may not be able to fully restore stability, but you can do a great deal to improve it.

Want the older adult tools to expand your market? CLICK HERE and get 25% off with this code – PROMO code: 25Sport Add eatwell after your purchase and get a nutrition course FREE!

Resources: Understanding the needs and physical limitations of older adults is important for trainers who wish to tap into this lucrative and growing market. As always, W.I.T.S. is on the cutting edge, providing quality education to help you grow as a fitness professional. To learn more about training older adults, explore our Older Adult Fitness Specialist, Older Adult Fitness Foundations, and Able Bodies Balance Training courses, all available online.

References and Credits

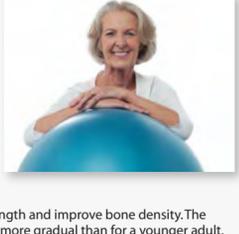
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- Gait and Posture: How fear of falling can increase fall-risk in older adults: Applying psychological theory to practical observations.
- Gait and Posture: Postural stability and history of falls in cognitively able older adults: the Canton Ticino study.

Pure Silver: Tapping Into the Older Adult Fitness Market

by Michelle Matte, MSED, CSCS

Grand Demand

One of the fastest growing markets in the fitness industry is the Older Adult sector. According to the "2015 Participation Report" from the Physical Activity Council, 59.3 percent of Baby Boomers born between 1945 and 1954 regularly participate in fitness activities. This generation often has the leisure time and the financial stability to make fitness a regular part of their daily lives. As a fitness professional, you can have a profoundly positive impact on the quality of life of older adults. However, understanding the unique needs of this market is essential.



Knowledge is Power

Working with older adults can be gratifying, and professionally and financially rewarding. But before you seek out clients in this demographic, you should educate yourself on the restrictions and limitations that are peculiar to this age group. Loss of metabolic mass and decreased bone density, along with decreased range of motion at the joints, all impede the programming of losses. Metabolic diseases and musculoskeletal afflictions must be taken into consideration. Enhancing your knowledge about the physical changes experienced by older adults is fundamental to realizing success as a trainer or group exercise instructor.

Easy Does It!

When training older adults, the fundamental principles of exercise still hold. Progressive overload is necessary to increase muscle strength and improve bone density. The principles of specificity and regularity also hold true. However, overload should be applied in moderation, and progression should be more gradual than for a younger adult. The "personal" part of personal training is critical if you are to provide programming for older adults that is safe and effective.

Golden Goals

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends an exercise prescription for older adults that includes aerobic exercise, muscle strengthening and flexibility exercises, along with balance training to reduce the risk of falls. Resistance training should be performed through the functional range of motion, with one to three sets of 10 to 15 repetitions, to fatigue. A minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity cardiovascular exercise should be performed daily. However, the 30 minutes can be broken up into shorter bouts throughout the day. Static stretching should be performed slowly, with muscles held at their longest length for 15 to 30 seconds. Balance training should be incorporated as a regular part of your training sessions.

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References and Credits

- American College of Sports Medicine: Exercise and the Older Adult
- American College of Sports Medicine: Resistance Training and the Older Adult
- Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise: Exercise and Physical Activity for Older Adults
- Physical Activity Council: 2015 Participation Report

Slow Your Roll: Yoga and Stress Management

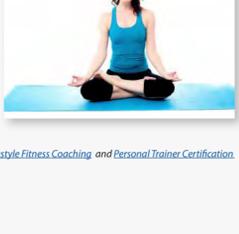
by Michelle Matte, MSED, CSCS

Coming Unraveled

Stress is an inevitable part of a busy productive lifestyle, and a little stress can motivate you to get the job done. But remaining in a chronic state of high anxiety for weeks, months or even years can take a serious toll on your health, both physically and mentally. Chronic stress has been linked to obesity, heart disease, dementia, and a variety of metabolic disorders. Making sweeping lifestyle changes that remove stress from your life altogether may not be an option, but you can learn to manage stress and mitigate its harmful outcomes. The practice of yoga is one strategy that has been proven to reduce stress and improve overall health.

Peaceful Panacea

Yoga has been shown to have many physical benefits, according to a 2004 study published in the West Indian Medical Journal. When performed regularly, yoga can improve muscle strength, increase flexibility, facilitate blood circulation, increase oxygen uptake and improve hormone function. When it comes to stress management, the study revealed that regular yoga practitioners became more resilient to stressful conditions and saw a reduction in risk factors for various diseases, especially heart disease.



Practice Makes Perfect

Yoga can be performed anywhere, with very few accessories. Loose, cool, non-restrictive clothing and a yoga mat or towel is all you need. Many yoga postures may seem challenging at first, but you will rapidly improve with regular practice. While you can easily do yoga at home with a DVD or download, a trained yoga instructor can help you perfect your yoga asanas, or postures, to ensure safety and reap optimal results. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends you perform yoga daily for 20 to 30 minutes. Yoga can be an important programming component for your personal training clients.

Resources: Helping your clients manage stress should be a fundamental consideration for any successful trainer. To learn more about stress management and lifestyle coaching, check out W.I.T.S. Lifestyle Fitness Coaching and Personal Trainer Certification Courses, both available online.

References and Credits

- American College of Sports Medicine: ACSM Issues New Recommendations on Quantity and Quality of Exercise
- Harvard Medical School: Mindfulness Meditation May Ease Anxiety, Mental Stress
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Join Our Medical Fitness Network Information Session

Baby Boomers and Medical Fitness

There is a significant increase in obesity & chronic disease in our aging population. Once thought the exception, now the norm, these clients are seeking the best from the fitness industry to serve them. Join Lisa Dougherty, founder of the Medical Fitness Network, as she discusses why fitness professionals should join the MFN and be part of the healthcare team.

Additional Information:

There are 100 million baby boomers (those 50+) in the U.S. – about 30% of our population and three-fourths of America's wealth. Source: <http://www.immersionactive.com/Item/Stats-Facts/>



According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 80% of older adults have one chronic medical condition, and 50% have 2 or more*. Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/aging.htm>

When: May 27th 2015

Time: 1:00 PM EDT

Registration Required: CLICK ON THE FB ICON

COMPLIMENTARY FOR WITS ALUMNI & INTERNSHIP SITES

Presenter: Lisa Dougherty is the founder of the Medical Fitness Network. The mission of Medical Fitness Network to improve the quality of life with those with chronic medical conditions by connecting them to the most qualified fitness & healthcare professionals with a background in treatment or rehabilitation of various diseases and medical conditions.

Lisa graduated from the University of California-Irvine's Fitness Instructor Program, and went on to get her Certified Personal Trainer and Health Coach Certifications through the American Council on Exercise. She has many specialty certifications to work with those with medical conditions, post surgical/rehab as well as pre & postpartum fitness.

Course work includes: Heart Disease, Breast Cancer Recovery, MS, Parkinson's, Diabetes, Dementia, Arthritis, Respiratory Disease, Fibromyalgia, Knee & hip replacement, and Pre & postpartum fitness.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Gaining More Bang for Your Buck: Exercise Equipment Kettlebells & TRX

By Chris Gellert, PT, MMusc & Sportsphysio, MPT, CSCS, AMS *A W.I.T.S. CEC Educational Vendor

Introduction

There is a multitude of exercise equipment at your fingertips to use with your clients. Ranging from traditional stationary machine based, free-weight, cable, to TRX, kettlebells and much more. Exercise equipment is evolving and changing. However, one element that hasn't changed is the physics and biomechanics behind using the equipment. In this article, we will review what exercise equipment is designed or intended to do, what client can benefit from these types of equipment vs. would be harmful and modifications of exercises explaining the why.



History of Exercise Equipment

The history of training dates back to the earliest civilizations, such as Greek and Chinese. The mythical story of Milo of Croton and his particularly training method is well known. His principle of training was considered a beginning of training with progressive load (Stojiljkovic, N., et al. 2013). Predecessors of the resistance training didn't have at their disposal the sophisticated equipment, which is available today. Weight training has held increasing popularity stemming from the 1970s, until today despite continued change, due to technology and innovations.

Types of Exercise Equipment

There are several different types of exercise equipment to improve flexibility, strength or conditioning.

Nautilus Machines

There is a multitude of exercise equipment at your fingertips to use with your clients. Ranging from traditional stationary machine based, free-weight, cable, to TRX, kettlebells and much more. Exercise equipment is evolving and changing. However, one element that hasn't changed is the physics and biomechanics behind using the equipment. In this article, we will review what exercise equipment is designed or intended to do, what client can benefit from these types of equipment vs. would be harmful and modifications of exercises explaining the why.

Cable Machine

Cable machines are equipment used for strength or functional training. It consists of a rectangular, vertically oriented based frame that consists of a weight stack at each end. Cables connect the handles to the weight stacks, which run through adjustable that can be fixed at any height. This design allows a variety of movements to be performed on the apparatus. The cable machine is ideal for clients who are interested in working on multidirectional movement patterns. Cable machines replicate controlled movement. Cable machines are ideal for clients who have experience with weight training and are able to understand more complicated movements than cable machines can reproduce.

Free Weights

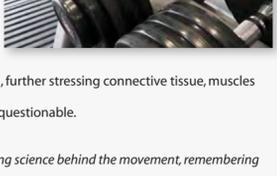
Free weights include dumbbells, barbells, medicine balls, sandbags, and kettle bells. Unlike, cable machines, they do not constrain a client to specific, fixed movement. Free weights do require more effort from one's stabilizing musculature. Free weights are effective for clients who again have exercise experience and who have completed physical therapy. For example let's look at the movement of pulling from the ground to chest level. Therefore, free-weights are ideal for clients who want to work muscles in different planes, as well as on different surfaces.

Kettle Bells

Kettle bells have undergone a face-lift since being introduced many years ago. The kettlebell has re-emerged in popularity, like Crossfit (Farrar, R., et al., 2010). Despite popularity, clinical data on their efficacy is limited (Spierer, K., et al., examined whether kettlebell training transfers strength and power to weightlifting and powerlifting exercises and improves muscular endurance. Results demonstrated a transfer of power and strength in response to 10 weeks of training. They are designed for clients who have weight lifting experience, want to improve strength and power and possess strong dynamic trunk control. They should not be used with clients who have a history of a rotator cuff repair. Biomechanically, the quick powerful movement places a tremendous stress on the surgical site.

TRX Equipment

TRX is suspension training, which is comprised of ropes and webbing. This approach uses one's own body weight. The benefits of this approach is that it enables someone to move in many different directions, loading one to multiple joints, improving ones flexibility then strength. However, due to the principle of overload, which states that a greater than normal stress or load on the body is required for training adaptation to take place. Meaning for muscle to grow (hypertrophy) or to be able to perform for extended bouts of time (muscular endurance), a load or weight needs to be applied. Because the TRX is a strap and webbing, there is no external resistance applied to the user. A client can still improve strength, however, physiologically won't see an anatomical adaptation due to the principle described.



TRX is effective for helping clients who have undergone soft-tissue injuries, and shoulder impingement, to enhance flexibility, prior to strengthening. Lastly, TRX can be used to help clients improve dynamic stabilization from the ground up.

TRX should not be used with clients who have a history of shoulder subluxation, dislocation, have a history of multiple injuries to one area, clients with disc injuries. Biomechanically, all of these conditions could place excessive stress to an injured area, further stressing connective tissue, muscles and supportive structures resulting in pain.

However, despite lack of quality evidenced based research, TRX can be useful with training clients, but long term gains remain questionable.

Summary

There are a multitude of pieces of exercise equipment at your fingertips to use as a fitness professional. It is important to understanding science behind the movement, remembering safety first, before program design and exercise prescription.

Chris is the CEO of Pinnacle Training & Consulting Systems (PTCS), A continuing education company, that provides educational material in the forms of home study courses, live seminars, DVDs, webinars, articles and eLearning courses teaching in-depth, the foundation science, functional training assessments and practical application behind Human Movement that is evidenced based. Chris is both a dynamic physical therapist with 15 years of experience, and a personal trainer with 19 years experience, with advanced training, has created over 10 courses, is an experienced international fitness presenter, writes for various websites and international publications, consults and teaches seminars on human movement.

WANT MORE? CLICK HERE!

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