

# Better mobility keeps seniors healthier

**As people lose the ability to walk unaided, they tend to suffer further deterioration that can interfere with other daily living activities. As the U.S. population ages, it becomes increasingly important to identify and target interventions for those people who are at risk for further disabilities and illness.**

In a paper published in the September issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, researchers closely examined the factors that affected Health-Related Quality-of-Life for a group of older Americans. The study revealed that mobility is a key factor impacting quality of life for older adults.

Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders–Pilot study (LIFE–P) was a randomized, controlled trial that compared a physical activity intervention to a non-exercise educational intervention with 424 older adults at risk for disability. Baseline information included demographics, medical history, the Quality of Well-Being Scale (QWB-SA), a timed 400 m walk, and the Short Physical Performance Battery (SPPB). Using these data, the authors looked for those factors that affected HRQOL.

The mean QWB-SA score for a sample of older adults considered at risk for disability was 0.634, below the 0.704 score found for healthy older adults. According to Erik J. Groessl, PhD, of the VA San Diego Healthcare System and University of California San Diego, the difference of 0.070 is “more than the amount attributed to a variety of diseases including colitis, migraine, arthritis, stroke, ulcer, asthma, and anxiety.

Surprisingly, however, mobility was a stronger correlate of HRQOL than an index of comorbidity, suggesting that interventions addressing mobility limitations may provide significant health benefits to this population. ...Taken together with past research, which has demonstrated that loss of mobility predicts loss of independence, mortality, and nursing home admission, it is clear that interventions that can preserve or improve mobility in older adults could produce increases in both quantity and quality of life.”

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