

GUIDE · RETIREMENT VILLAGES, AGED CARE AND SENIORS GYMS

Falls prevention exercise programs in retirement villages and aged care

Why falls matter, what works, and a practical checklist for running programs residents use and boards, families and clinicians can trust.

For village managers, wellness and lifestyle coordinators, allied health teams and aged care providers in Australia and New Zealand.

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The scale of the problem

43%

of injury deaths in Australia in 2023-24 were caused by falls (6,698 deaths)

248,211

injury hospitalisations from falls in 2023-24, also 43% of the total

~12x

more likely: people aged 65+ are almost 12 times as likely to be hospitalised from a fall as adults aged 25 to 44

Falls cost the Australian health system about \$5 billion in 2022-23 (AIHW). For residents, a single fall can mean the loss of confidence, mobility and independence that brought them to a village in the first place.

What works

- Exercise reduces the rate of falls by 23% in older people living in the community; balance and functional exercise by 24%; programs combining balance, functional and resistance exercise by 34% (Cochrane review, 2019)
- In New Zealand, ACC's Live Stronger for Longer reports 29% fewer falls when community strength and balance classes are delivered well
- Australian guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days for people aged 65+, with a mix of fitness, strength, flexibility and balance

Why this is on boards' agendas

- Residential aged care homes report falls and major injury, decline in daily living activities and quality of life to government every quarter
- The strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards started on 1 November 2025
- 47% of Australian retirement villages now run health and fitness programs, and a well-used gym helps sell the village

Program checklist

Set-up

- ☐ A named lead (exercise physiologist, physio or qualified trainer) owns the program
 - ☐ Every participant is screened before starting, with any flagged health answers cleared by a GP or allied health professional
 - ☐ Each resident has a baseline using the balance, strength and mobility measures your clinicians trust
 - ☐ Goals are written in the resident's own words, such as walking to the dining room without resting
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- ☐ Programs include both balance challenges and strength work, not only gentle movement or chair exercise
- ☐ Seated and supported options exist for residents with lower mobility

Delivery

- ☐ Sessions run at least twice a week, with home or room exercises between sessions
- ☐ Balance challenge increases over time as residents improve
- ☐ Attendance is recorded every session, by staff if residents don't use an app
- ☐ A resident who misses two sessions in a row gets a check-in
- ☐ Falls, near-falls, pain and new symptoms are noted and passed to the care or clinical team

Review and reporting

- ☐ Residents are reassessed at set points (for example weeks 6 and 12) against their baseline
- ☐ Residents see their own progress, which keeps them coming back
- ☐ With consent, progress goes to families, GPs and physios
- ☐ Village managers and boards see participation rates and changes across the site
- ☐ In aged care, exercise records sit alongside the resident's care plan so allied health activity is easy to evidence

Village vs residential aged care

	Retirement village	Residential aged care
Who exercises	Independent residents, often in a village gym	Residents with higher care needs, often in groups or one-on-one
Who records	Residents in an app, plus trainers	Staff and allied health assistants on a tablet
Who asks for results	Village managers, boards, prospective residents	Care managers, families, clinicians, quality teams
Biggest risk	Low participation after the gym opens	Programs stopping when a staff member leaves

About GreeneDesk. GreeneDesk is an Australian company and a software platform for sports and recreation facilities: FitDesk for fitness floors and seniors programs, SwimDesk for aquatic programs, and SportDesk for squads. Australian customer data stays in Australia. Book a demo at greenedesk.com.au.

Sources

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