

GUIDE · SENIORS, FALLS PREVENTION AND ACTIVE AGEING PROGRAMS

Running strength and balance programs for older adults

What the evidence says, what safe delivery looks like, and the records funders, families and GPs expect.

For leisure centres, councils, YMCAs, retirement villages, aged care and allied health teams in Australia and New Zealand.

GreeneDesk

What the evidence says

23%

fewer falls with exercise overall in older people living in the community (Cochrane, 2019)

34%

fewer falls with multi-component programs, typically balance and functional plus resistance training

29%

fewer falls with well-delivered community strength and balance classes (ACC Live Stronger for Longer, NZ)

The Cochrane review (Sherrington et al., 2019) found balance and functional exercise reduced the rate of falls by 24%, and Tai Chi by 19% (lower certainty). Programs that combine several types of exercise had the largest effect.

Australian guidelines for people aged 65 and over

- At least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days
- A mix of fitness, strength, flexibility and balance activities across the week
- Balance activities such as side leg raises, half squats and heel raises can help prevent falls
- Start with 10 minutes once or twice a day if 30 minutes is too much, and build up

Why now

- Support at Home started on 1 November 2025. Its Restorative Care Pathway funds up to 12 weeks of allied-health-led support, with a possible 4-week extension
- Residential aged care homes report falls, decline in daily living activities and quality of life to government every quarter
- Victoria's Living Longer Living Stronger program ended in February 2025, and many centres now run their own seniors strength programs
- People aged 65+ are now the second-largest group of gym users

Safe delivery checklist

Before the program

- ☐ Every participant is screened (for example with the APSS) and any Stage 1 "yes" is cleared before starting
 - ☐ A baseline is recorded using the balance, strength and mobility assessments your team trusts
 - ☐ Goals are agreed in the participant's own words, such as getting up from a chair unaided
 - ☐ The program is built from a shared template so any instructor can deliver it
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During the program

- ☐ Exercises progressively challenge balance, with safe support options available
- ☐ Strength or resistance work is included, not just gentle movement
- ☐ Attendance is recorded every session, and missed sessions trigger a follow-up call
- ☐ Instructors note any falls, near-falls, pain or new symptoms and act on them
- ☐ Participants have home exercises they can follow between sessions

Reviewing and reporting

- ☐ Reassessment happens at set points, such as weeks 6 and 12, against the baseline
- ☐ Participants see their own progress; it is one of the strongest reasons people keep coming
- ☐ With consent, progress reports go to families, GPs, physios or case managers
- ☐ Program-level results (participation, attendance, change from baseline) are reported to council, funders or management
- ☐ Programs that run for funders such as Support at Home providers have clear start and end assessments

Records that make a program fundable

Record	Who asks for it
Screening and clearances	Your own risk and insurance teams
Baseline and follow-up assessments	Funders, case managers, GPs
Attendance and adherence	Council, management, funders
Progress reports	Participants, families, clinicians

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

Sherrington C et al. Exercise for preventing falls in older people living in the community: an abridged Cochrane systematic review. BJSM 2020;54:885: <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/54/15/885>

Australian Government Department of Health, Physical activity and exercise guidelines for older Australians (65 years and over): <https://health.gov.au/health-topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-older-australians>

Sport Canterbury, Live Stronger for Longer: <https://www.sportcanterbury.org.nz/what-we-do/live-stronger-for-longer>

Department of Health, Support at Home: <https://www.health.gov.au/node/49571>

Department of Health, QI Program fact sheet: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/fact-sheet-for-clinical-care-teams-qi-program_0.docx

COTA Victoria, Living Longer Living Stronger: <https://cotavic.org.au/programs-events/strength-training/are-you-a-lls-partner/>

Aged Care Today, purpose-built gyms in retirement villages: <https://carevision.com/purpose-built-gyms-in-retirement-villages/>

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