SYNOPSIS

KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

Using the Longitudinal Study of Aging, this study explored how low levels of physical activity influence lower body functional limitations.

Physical Activity, Functional Limitations, and Disability in Older Adults

Miller, M. E., Rejeski, W. J., Reboussin, B. A., Ten Have, T. R., Ettinger, W. H.
2000 | Journal of the American Geriatrics Society
Volume 48, Issue 10, Pages 1264–1272

Key Concepts/Context

Research suggests that physical activity slows the progression of disability in seniors and, thus, prolongs independent living. Geriatric care-givers often use the activities of daily living (ADL), such as feeding and grooming, and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), such as managing finances and housework, to determine if older adults have the skills necessary to live independently.

Methods

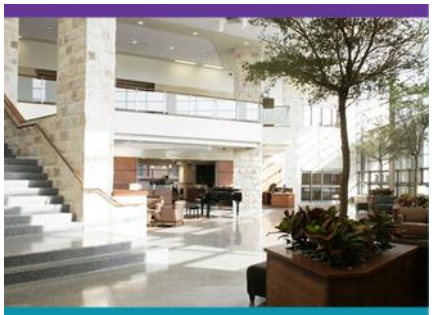
The study analyzed a complex sample survey of noninstitutionalized adults aged 70 years and older in 1984, with repeated interviews in 1986, 1988, and 1990. Researchers used the following characteristics in their analyses: gender; age; level of physical activity; comorbid conditions including hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, and atherosclerotic heart disease; levels of functional limitations; and ADL/IADL disability.

Findings

Using transitional models, the researchers found that older adults with varying levels of disability and who report at least a minimal level of physical activity experience a slower progression in functional limitations. Through its influence on changes in functional limitations, this low level of physical activity slows the progression of ADL/IADL disability.

Limitations

Authors identified no limitations of the study.



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Design Implications

The study identified that some level of physical activity is helpful in slowing down a progression of functional limitations, especially for aging populations. This brings attention to the importance of environmental factors that promote physical activity of aging populations and calls for further studies that investigate the impact of environmental factors on physical activity.