

# eFit eLearning Course Handout



- What is frailty?
- What are the effects of frailty on older adults?
- How can frailty be prevented?

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## What is Frailty?

- Frailty is a medical condition of reduced function and health.
- Frailty is **not** an inevitable part of aging, but frailty does become more common as someone ages.
- Over 1.5 million Canadians are living with frailty.
- Many frail people will not be diagnosed until they have a serious fall or other event that results in hospitalization.
- Things like inactivity, poor nutrition, and social isolation or loneliness, and multiple medications all contribute to frailty.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.a; Caregivers Nova Scotia; 2020](#)

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## Impact of Frailty

- When a person is frail:
  - they are more likely to have many health care problems reducing their ability to do the activities necessary for daily living
  - their body does not have the ability to cope with minor illnesses that would normally have had only a minor impact when they were healthy
  - minor health changes may trigger rapid and dramatic deterioration
- The presence of frailty can lead to:
  - a higher use of emergency room & hospital services
  - a move to a residential or long-term care facility
  - a shorter life
- Frailty can be reversible in the early stages but over time a frail individual will likely have gradual but constant loss in function.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.a; Caregivers Nova Scotia; 2020](#)

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## Assessing Frailty

The 9-point Clinical Frailty Scale is a common tool used to assess a person's frailty status.

1. **Very Fit** – robust, active, energetic and motivated, exercises regularly and is among the fittest for their age.
2. **Well** – has no active disease symptoms but are less fit than very fit; they exercise or are very active occasionally, e.g. seasonally.
3. **Managing Well** – medical problems are well controlled, but person does not regularly exercise beyond routine walking.
4. **Vulnerable** –not dependent on others for daily help but symptoms limit activities. A common complaint is being tired during the day.
5. **Mildly Frail** – slower and need help with finances, transportation, heavy housework, and medications.

[Rockwood et al., 2007](#)

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## Assessing Frailty

Clinical Frailty Scale continued:

6. **Moderately Frail** – needs help with all outside activities and keeping house, have problems with stairs and need help with bathing and/or dressing
7. **Severely Frail** – completely dependent for personal care but seem stable and not at high risk of dying within ~ 6 months
8. **Very Severely Frail** – completely dependent, approaching the end of life. Typically, they could not recover even from a minor illness.
9. **Terminally Ill** - approaching the end of life. This category applies to people with a life expectancy of less than 6 months, who are not otherwise evidently frail.

[Rockwood et al., 2007](#)

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## Tests

- Other tests used to assess frailty include:
  - **Gait Speed Test**, which measures walking and mobility and can predict advancing frailty
  - **Timed Up and Go**, which identifies falls risk, gait and balance abnormalities
  - **Short Physical Performance Battery**, which monitors functional ability by watching how a person stands when their feet are side by side, then with one foot ahead of the other and finally heel to toe



[Physiopedia, n.d.](#)

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## AVOID Frailty

- A Activity
- V Vaccinate
- O Optimize medication
- I Interact
- D Diet and nutrition

- The best treatment for frailty is prevention - frailty can be avoided!
- The AVOID abbreviation helps a person organize a strategy to reduce or prevent frailty.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.b](#)

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## AVOID Frailty: Activity

- Activity and exercise can slow and sometimes reverse frailty.
- Adults aged 65 years and older should:
  - **get the heart beating**: Accumulate 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week that is moderate intensity (i.e. makes you sweat and breathe harder) to vigorous intensity (i.e. makes you out of breath). Aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can start by doing 10-minute increments.
  - **strengthen the muscles**: Add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least 2 days per week.
  - **challenge balance**: Perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls
- Remember to recharge and repair; older adults need 7-9 hours of sleep nightly.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.b](#); [Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2011](#)

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## Benefits to Regular Activity

- Regular activity:
  - improves ability to perform daily tasks
  - improves joint mobility
  - improves sleep quality
  - helps prevent weak bones and muscle loss
  - reduces the risk of chronic conditions
  - extends years of active and independent living
  - lowers risk of dementia
  - reduces likelihood of falling and risk of serious injury if a fall occurs

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.b](#)

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## Types of Activity



### Aerobic Exercise

- Gets the heart pumping and supplies oxygen to the brain and organs.
- Involves repetition and use of large muscle groups.
- Examples include brisk walking, swimming, cycling, taking a dance class, pushing a lawn mower.
- Aim for 20-30 minutes per day at a moderate intensity.



### Strength Exercise

- Makes muscles do more work than they are used to doing during daily living.
- Examples include weight training with free weights, weight machines, resistance bands or even just by using body weight.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.c](#)

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## Types of Activity



### Flexibility Exercise

- Stretch the muscles.
- Being flexible gives a person more freedom of movement, which benefits everyday activities and other forms of exercise.
- Challenge flexibility and balance with exercises like yoga, leg raises, swimming, and tai chi.



### Balance Exercise

- Strengthen the muscles that help to keep a person upright, including legs and core.
- These kinds of exercises can improve stability and help prevent falls.
- Examples include yoga and tai chi.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.c](#)

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## Types of Activity



### Functional Exercise

- Train muscles to work together and prepares them for daily tasks by reproducing common movements that are done during everyday living.
- It involves using various muscles in the upper and lower body at the same time.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.c](#)

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## AVOID Frailty: Vaccinate

- Vaccines can help older adults avoid contracting diseases.
- Infectious diseases are more likely to cause negative health outcomes in older adults living with frailty including:
  - prolonged bed rest or hospitalization
  - cardiovascular events
  - death
- Recommended vaccines for older adults are:
  - influenza Vaccine (annually; high dose for those over 65)
  - shingles Vaccine (one-time vaccine)
  - pneumococcal Vaccine (one-time vaccine)
- Talk to a health care provider about other boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.d](#)

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## AVOID Frailty: Optimize Medications

- The more prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and supplements that an older adult takes, the higher the risk of harmful effects, drug interactions, and hospitalizations.
  - Harmful effects might be confusion, malnutrition and falls.
- Ask a health care provider:
  - What changes could be made to medication routine?
  - Why are these medications ordered? Can they be reduced?
  - What is the proper way to take the medications?
  - What are possible side effects?

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.e](#)

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## AVOID Frailty: Interact

- Older adults who experience high levels of loneliness and social isolation are at an increased risk of frailty, functional decline, malnutrition, depression and premature death.
- To avoid loneliness consider:
  - volunteering
  - going to a senior's centre
  - joining an interest group
  - arranging visits with family and friends

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.f](http://CanadianFrailtyNetwork.n.d.f)

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## AVOID Frailty: Diet and Nutrition

- Poor nutrition, also called malnutrition, occurs when there is a lack of nutrients in a diet due to poor diet, not eating enough food or to problems absorbing nutrients from food.
- Poor nutrition increases the risk of frailty.
- Many older adults are malnourished because they are:
  - not hungry
  - have a poor sense of smell or taste
  - sick or take medications that interfere with digestion and nutrition
  - have mobility issues that make shopping and meal preparation hard
  - do not have money for food
  - do not want to eat alone
  - have dental health issues like cavities or ill-fitting bridges & dentures

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.g](http://CanadianFrailtyNetwork.n.d.g)

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## AVOID Frailty: Diet and Nutrition

- [Canada's Food Guide](#) recommends older adults consume:
  - 7 servings of vegetables and fruit
  - 6-7 servings of grain products
  - 3 servings of milk and alternatives
  - 2 to 3 servings of meat and alternatives
- Key nutrients for older adults include vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin D, calcium, iron and fibre.
- Adults over 70 years old should have 1200 mg of calcium and 800 IU of vitamin D each day.
- Good oral health is associated with healthy food choices and proper nutrition.

[Canadian Frailty Network, n.d.g](#)

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## What is Frailty?

- This video provides a summary on frailty.
  - [Frailty Video](#) (2.51 minutes)

[Caregivers Nova Scotia 2020](#)

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## Reflection...AVOID Frailty

Consider the AVOID acronym. What changes can you make to avoid frailty?

- **A**ctivity
- **V**accinate
- **O**ptimize medication
- **I**nteract
- **D**iet and nutrition



## You Have Completed the Frailty eLearning Course!

For more information on this and other topics, please visit our [eFit Resources for Individuals & Caregivers on www.sagelink.ca](http://www.sagelink.ca).

We appreciate your feedback. Please contact [info@sagelink.ca](mailto:info@sagelink.ca) if you have suggestions, comments or have any questions.

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