

傳媒報導

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Majority of elderly people have early signs of frailty, study shows

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More than half of the city's elderly people are showing early signs of frailty, a Chinese University study has revealed.

And researchers behind the study, which assessed the health of 816 people aged 65 or above last year, said frailty was not an inevitable consequence of ageing. They urged young and old alike to take care of their health.

The research, conducted in association with the Jockey Club Cadenza Hub, a public health NGO based in Tai Po, saw the elderly people assessed on a five-point scale testing fatigue, resistance, ambulation, illness and loss of weight (FRAIL).

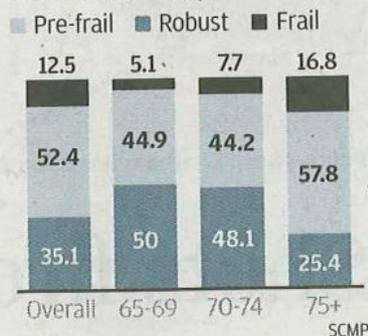
Those with problems on one or two of those matters were considered "pre-frail", defined as showing early signs of frailty. Those with more problems were considered frail.

Some 12.5 per cent of respondents, or one in eight, were considered frail. Some 52.4 per cent were considered pre-frail. Frailty increased with age, with just 5.1 per cent of people aged 65 to 69 considered frail, rising to 16.8 per cent for those aged 75 and above.

Further studies of the frail group found that they had a significantly weaker physical and psychological state—experienced more chronic diseases, took

Showing their age

Prevalence of frailty (%)



People who maintain regular exercise ... are more likely to remain healthy

PROFESSOR JEAN WOO

more medication, had a higher chance of mild cognitive impairment, and experienced more falls and symptoms of depression.

Elderly people who exercised for more than an hour a day fared considerably better than those who did not.

Professor Jean Woo Ling-fong, director of the S.H. Ho Centre for Gerontology and Geriatrics at Chinese University, said frailty was not inevitable.

"Older people who maintain regular physical exercise and cognitive training are more likely to remain healthy and live independently," Woo said. However, only exercise vigorous enough to raise a person's heartbeat above the normal level would be useful in preventing frailty, she added.

Elderly people who showed signs of pre-frailty and frailty were encouraged to join a 12-week training programme at the Jockey Club Cadenza Hub, offering both muscle strengthening and brain training.

Michael Chung Ka-shing, personal trainer in the programme, said the exercises should strengthen muscles in the arms, thighs and abdomen. While participants in the programme trained with steps and resistance bands, Chung said people at home could do sit-ups, star jumps or push-ups to strengthen the body.

Protein was also essential for slowing down the deterioration of muscles, Woo added.

"Egg whites, meat and tofu are rich in protein ... if you do not have a good appetite, supplements can be considered too," she said.

But the best way to prevent frailty in old age is to establish a healthy lifestyle earlier in life, she added.

"You should lead a healthy life when you are young. Do not wait until you are 60 years old."

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