

Frailty and Older Adults

Frailty syndrome refers to age-related deficits in normal function involving various body systems, leading to loss of muscle, stamina, endurance, weight, and overall fitness.

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What is Frailty Syndrome?

Frailty Syndrome refers to age-related deficits in normal function involving various body systems, leading to loss of muscle, stamina, endurance, weight, and overall fitness.

When you are frail, your body lacks the ability to handle minor illnesses that would typically have minimal impact if you were healthy

Older adults living with frailty are more susceptible to flu and adverse events such as falls, which increases the likelihood of hospitalization, long-term care needs, or death.

The risk of frailty increases with age, but the two are not the same.

Frailty is NOT an inevitable part of aging!

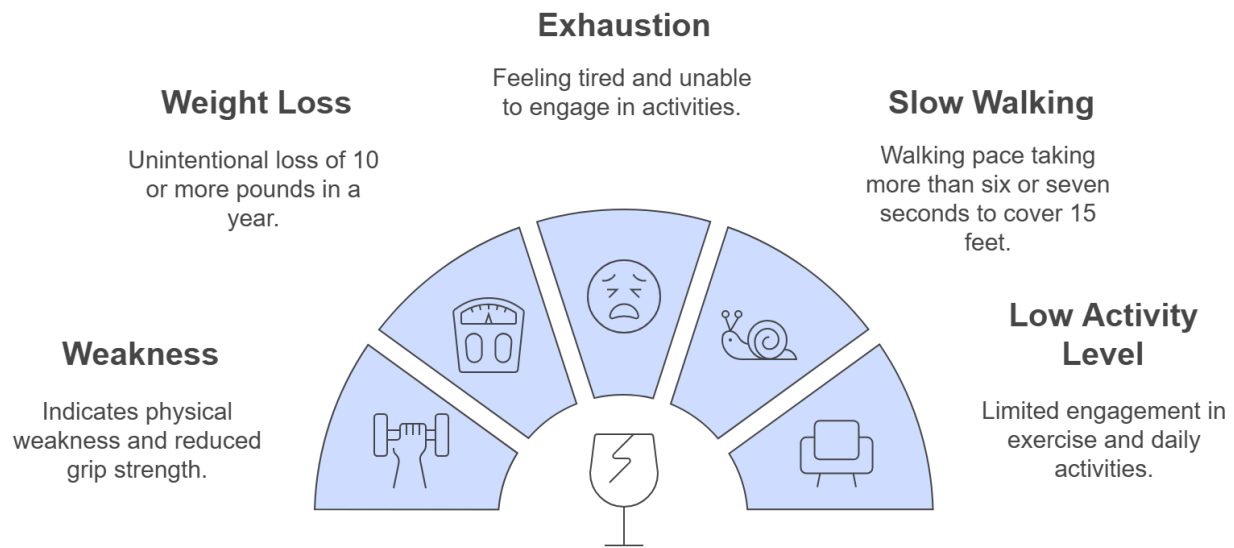
Factors such as lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, social isolation, loneliness, and taking multiple medications can all contribute to frailty.

Currently, over 1.6 million Canadians are living with frailty. That number is projected to increase to over 2.5 million over the next 10 years.

Features of Frailty

You may be considered frail if three or more of these criteria, as developed by Johns Hopkins, apply to you:

- **You feel weak.** You have trouble standing without assistance or have reduced grip strength.
- You've unintentionally **lost 10 or more pounds** in the past year.
- **You feel exhausted.** Everything you do takes a considerable effort, or you can't get going three or more days most weeks.
- **You walk slowly.** Your pace is considered slow if the time it takes you more than six or seven seconds to walk 15 feet.
- **Your activity level is low.** This includes formal exercise plus household chores and activities you do for fun.



Prevention & Treatment of Frailty

The most important preventive strategy is **exercising regularly and targeting major muscle groups**. For example, if you walk or run, balance that exercise with weight lifting, push-ups, and sit-ups to strengthen the arms and abdominal muscles.

A second strategy is diet. Eat a **balanced diet** for the prevention and treatment of frailty. Aim for three healthy daily meals with fruit, vegetables, protein, good fats, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Be sure to include enough muscle-nurturing proteins from foods such as low-fat milk, fish or poultry, cooked dried beans, and yogurt.

A third strategy for treatment is preventing socioeconomic and environmental stress by prudent financial planning and social engagement with others.

The management of frail patients must be individualized and tailored to each patient's goals of care and life expectancy. Physical activity and balance exercises may be suitable for less frail patients. Palliative care and symptom control may be appropriate for those who are more frail.

Sources:

Frailty: Evaluation and Management

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33587574/>

Frailty: A New Predictor of Outcome as We Age

<https://muschealth.org/medical-services/geriatrics-and-aging/healthy-aging/frailty>

Canadian Frailty Network

<https://www.cfn-nce.ca>

Stay Strong: Four Ways to Beat the Frailty Risk

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/stay-strong-four-ways-to-beat-the-frailty-risk>

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