



Frailty - What Have We Learned from Women's Health Initiative Participants?

Nancy Fugate Woods, BSN, PhD, FAAN, FGSA

Professor Emerita, University of Washington
School of Nursing

Frailty in Aging Women

What is frailty? How can we recognize it in older women?

Who is most likely to be/become frail?

What are the consequences of becoming frail?

How can we prevent frailty?

What is Frailty? How Can We Recognize It?

- Weakness—decreased grip strength
- Slowness—slow walking speed
- Poor endurance, exhaustion—feeling worn out, tired, lack of energy or pep
- Low levels of physical activity
- Unintentional weight loss (shrinking, sarcopenia)



Who Were Most Likely to Become Frail in 3 Years?

- Older Women - 70-79 > 60-69 years
- Lower family incomes
- Less formal education
- Current smokers
- Current hormone therapy users
- Women who were underweight or overweight
- African American women less likely

Women with Chronic Illnesses More Likely to Become Frail

- Congestive heart failure
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Treated high blood pressure
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Arthritis

After 3 years, frail women were **more** likely to:

- be living with others, less likely living alone
- rate their health as fair or poor
- report symptoms of depression
- have difficulty with activities of daily living

In 3 years, women who were frail also were more likely to have:

- fallen 2 or more times in the past 12 months
- been hospitalized
- fractured a hip
- died

Can Frailty be Prevented? How?



- Physical activity to maintain muscle mass
- Eat healthy diet—protein for muscle
- Active mind and body

Physical Activity



Muscle strength training

Walking



Physical Activity



Walking & strength training

Walking groups—for support & safety



Physical Activity

Swimming & water aerobics



Classes such as dancing



Physical Activity – upper body workout



Eating A Healthy Diet

- WHI Participants Eating More **Protein**—Less Likely to Become Frail
 - Protein for muscle mass
 - Low fat milk
 - Fish, poultry, meats
 - Cooked dried beans
 - Yogurt, lower fat

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet > Lower Rate of Frailty

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Nuts, Legumes
- Low-fat Dairy
- Whole Grains
- Sodium (limited)
- Sweetened beverages (limited)
- Red and processed meats (limited)

Mediterranean Diet > Lower Rate of Frailty



Fruits and vegetables
Beans and other
proteins, Fish

Healthy fats, olive oil
Low fat dairy
Nuts



Limit meats and sweets!

Whole grains



Active Mind

Purposeful
Living
Social
Engagement



Thank you for your help in studying
older women's health!!