

Impact of the First Step to Active Aging on older adult's Functional Fitness, Balance, and Daily Activity

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Purpose of the study was to determine how the First Step to Active Aging (FSAH) program impacts functional fitness (FF), balance, and daily physical activity (DPA) in older adults. The FSAH group consisted of 18 women. FSAH group met at a senior center for 12 wk, 2d-wk for a 50 min. training program (flexibility, strength, balance, aerobic). The control group consisted of 15 women. Program effectiveness was assessed using measures of FF (chair stand, arm curl, sit & reach, up & go, scratch test, and 12-min walk), balance (movement velocity (MVL), endpoint excursion (EPE), maximum EPE (MXE), and directional control (DCL) for forward (F), right (R), left (L) and back (B) movements), pedometer measured DPA, and weight. Findings show that no baseline difference existed between groups. Repeated measures ANOVAs revealed group x time interactions ($p < .05$) on all measures except flexibility. After 12 weeks, FF improvements were noted in the FSAH group: Chair Stand 35%, Arm Curl 26%; Up-&-Go 8%; 12-min Walk 14%. With respect to LOS, MXE improved in all directions (F 18%, R 14%, B 23%, L 10%) and DCL improved in the F direction 9%. DPA also increased from 3,108 to 5,077 steps (38%) and Ss lost 2.3lbs (2%). The control group did not change in any variable.

DISCUSSION: Participating in a FSAH program improves FF, which may result in improved function and more years living independently.