



Sandoval County Senior Program Administration

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CENTER LOCATION

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Sandoval County Senior Program
1500 Idalia Rd., Bldg. D
P O Box 40
Bernalillo NM 87004

Phone: 867-7535
Fax: 867-7606

Hours of Operation:
Monday—Friday 8-5pm

Sponsorship

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ADMINISTRATION STAFF

Senior Program Administrator
Desi Aragon

Accounting Specialist
Sharon Hicks

Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Stivers

Transportation Drivers
Matthew Montoya (**Scheduler-Driver**)
Greg Shea (**Driver**)
Elonn Cochrane (**Driver**)

Food Service Manager
Donald Ravizza

SAMS Data Coordinator
Alicia Arriola

All Sites individualize their newsletters to their local area information, activities calendars and games.

Health & Wellness

To See How Well You're Aging, Try Standing on One Leg

Got balance? For older adults, how long you can stand on one leg may be a key indicator of well-being and how well you are aging. The changes in balance that happen as we grow older provide a more revealing measure of aging than changes in strength or gait, a new Mayo Clinic study found.

Good balance, muscle strength, and an efficient gait contribute to people's independence and well-being as they grow older, says senior author Kenton Kaufman, PhD, director of the motion analysis laboratory at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Gait is how a person walks, and changes in gait can lead to falls, pain, and other health issues.

Understanding how these areas decline over time could help healthcare providers identify people who may benefit from interventions to help them maintain mobility and independence.

Why Balance Is a Good Indicator of How Well You're Aging

The cross-sectional study (meaning the participants were measured at a single point in time) included a total of 40 people — 20 men and 20 women. Half of the participants were 56 years old on average, and the other half were an average age of 74. The following tests were used to assess any age-related declines or differences between men and women:

Grip Strength A handheld device was used to measure upper body strength.

Knee Strength Knee extension exercises assessed lower body strength.

Gait Participants walked at their own pace on a designated path while their movements were captured using a motion analysis system.

Balance Participants stood on plates that measured balance in four different scenarios: on both feet with eyes open, with eyes closed, and on the dominant and nondominant leg with eyes open.

In the one-legged tests, participants could hold the leg they weren't standing on where they wanted. The tests were 30 seconds each.

In considering the results, researchers accounted for factors like the size of the person (larger people tend to be stronger) and height (longer legs usually mean faster walking).

Of all the measures, they found that standing on one leg — specifically the nondominant leg — showed the highest rate of decline with age.

Health & Wellness continued

“Balance is an important measure because, in addition to muscle strength, it requires all your body systems to work together. Good balance allows you to carry out your activities of daily living without fear of falling,” says Dr. Kaufman.

Falls Cause a Million Hospitalizations Each Year

If you have poor balance, you’re at risk of falling, whether or not you’re moving, Kaufman says.

“Falls are a severe health risk that can have life-changing consequences. I think nearly everybody has a story of someone they know, a family member or a close friend, who has fallen, or they have an older parent who has fallen recently,” says Kaufman.

Each year, there are about three million emergency department visits due to older people falling, and about one million fall-related hospitalizations.

Other key findings included:

- Grip and knee strength showed significant declines by decade, but not as much as balance. Grip strength decreased at a faster rate than knee strength, making it better at predicting aging than other strength measures.
- For the gait test, participants walked back and forth on a level 8-meter walkway at their own pace and speed. Gait parameters didn’t change with age, which made sense, since participants were walking at their normal pace, says Kaufman.
- There were no age-related declines in the strength tests that were specific to sex, which suggests that people’s grip and knee strength declined at a similar rate.

Loss of Balance Could Be the ‘Canary in the Coalmine’

For this study, the researchers looked at three domains related to aging that have all been studied for a long time and then put all those pieces together to see what’s most important, saysCarolynn Patten, PhD, a professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at UC Davis Health in California. Dr. Patten specializes in assessment and treatment of motor dysfunction associated with aging and was not involved in this research.

These findings could be useful in part because doctors are often pressed for time and there can be a lot to cover in an office visit, she says.

“This could help providers focus on a measure such as balance to see how a person is aging. It could be the ‘canary in the coalmine’ that’s one of the first things to go, and we need to pay more attention to that,” says Patten.

Because the group studied here was small, only 40 people, the findings should be interpreted with caution, she adds.

Health & Wellness continued

How to Improve Your Balance

The good news is that working on your balance is simple and you can do it just about anywhere, says Kaufman.

“You can do this at home while you’re washing dishes or brushing your teeth. Just time yourself on how long you can spend on one leg,” he says.

Make sure you have a chair or a wall nearby to steady or catch yourself, says Kaufman. If you can stand on one leg for 30 seconds, you are doing well, he says.

“In our group of people over age 65, they averaged 11 seconds. The number that causes concern would be below five seconds. That says you’re at risk of falling,” says Kaufman.

By standing on one leg, you’re training yourself to coordinate your muscle and vestibular responses to maintain correct balance.

The vestibular system includes structures inside your inner ear (called otolith organs) and semicircular canals that detect head movements. Your brain uses this information to help you balance.

“If you practice balance, you’re more likely to maintain it. It doesn’t require special equipment, and you can do it every day,” he says.

Nutrition

Want to Age Well? High-Quality Carbs Might Hold the Key

Women who ate more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans improved their odds of making it to age 70 without chronic diseases or depression, a large new study found.

If you’re avoiding carbs in an effort to improve your diet, you may want to reconsider. A new study found that women who ate more carbohydrates — especially the unrefined kind in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans — significantly improved their odds of making it to age 70 without chronic diseases, memory loss, physical decline, or depression.

However, when the researchers looked specifically at women with higher intakes of refined carbohydrates — the kind in white bread, pastries, and processed snacks — they saw that benefit disappear.

“We’ve all heard that different carbohydrates can affect health differently, whether for weight, energy, or blood sugar levels. But rather than just look at the immediate effects of these macronutrients, we wanted to understand what they might mean for good health 30 years later,” says lead author Andres Ardisson Korat, DSc, a scientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.

Nutrition continued

The study defined healthy aging as:

- Living to at least 70 years old
- Not having one of 11 major chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes, or cancer
- Staying mentally sharp with no memory issues
- Maintaining physical ability, including the ability to engage in moderate activities like walking a few blocks
- Having good mental health as measured by standardized depression scale for older adults

Key Study Findings

The research followed over 47,000 women from the long-running Nurses' Health Study, tracking their diet starting in midlife (around age 48) and their health into older age (up to their nineties).

At the end of the study, only 8 percent of the women met the criteria for healthy aging. Key findings included:

- Women who ate more fiber, more carbs of any type, and more high-quality carbs had between a 6 to 37 percent greater likelihood of healthy aging and better mental and physical health.
- Eating more highly processed carbs was linked to a 13 percent lower chance of healthy aging.
- A higher glycemic index and carb-to-fiber ratio was also linked to lower odds of healthy aging.

How the Study Was Conducted

Based on questionnaire responses, researchers tabulated the following dietary intakes for participants:

- Total carbs
- Refined carbs from processed foods
- High-quality (unrefined) carbs from whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes,
- Dietary fiber

Researchers also used the questionnaires to calculate the glycemic index and glycemic load of these carbohydrates.

Glycemic index is a measure from 0 to 100 of how a carb-containing food raises blood sugar levels. Generally speaking, highly processed foods have a higher glycemic index, and foods high in fiber or fat have lower indexes.

Glycemic load uses the glycemic index but also factors in the total carbs to help estimate how quickly a food causes blood sugar to rise and how much blood sugar levels will rise in total after eating.

Nutrition continued

How Can Healthy Carbs Help You Age Better?

It's likely that quality carbs helped with healthier aging for a few reasons, says Nathan Wood, MD, a chef and the director of the culinary medicine program at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. Wood was not involved in the study.

Fiber

"Fiber is an extremely beneficial component of our diets. It plays an important role in digestive health and feeds our gut microbiome. We are learning more and more about how the health of the microbes in our gut is connected to all sorts of other positive health outcomes — from mental health to heart health to preventing diabetes," says Wood.

"Fiber intake may decrease levels of markers of inflammation, and this may improve biological pathways involved in aging," says Dr. Korat.

Fiber also prevents weight gain and its associated complications, he says. "This is because fiber takes up a lot of room in our digestive tract, but our body doesn't absorb it. It makes us feel full when we eat it, but it doesn't give our body any energy [calories]," says Wood.

Antioxidants

Another important aspect to consider is that whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans (like all plants) contain antioxidants, says Wood.

"Antioxidants help to combat inflammation. In this way, they can protect against cancer, diabetes, heart disease, fatty liver disease, and even signs of aging," he says.

Why You Shouldn't Be Afraid of Carbs

"Many people fear carbohydrates, but they are an essential component of the human diet," says Wood.

It's interesting that consuming more carbohydrates overall was associated with improved aging, he says.

"It's likely the case that these carbohydrates came from more healthy sources. In addition, this could mean that these participants who were consuming more carbohydrates were consuming less fat," says Wood.

Although fat is also a necessary component of the human diet, many of us eat too much of it, he says.

"Even more important is the type of fat we consume. Saturated fat, which is solid at room temperature (think beef tallow, butter, and coconut oil), increases our LDL or 'bad' cholesterol. Higher levels of LDL cholesterol are connected to a higher risk for heart disease and strokes. That's why swapping out saturated fat for carbohydrates would likely lead to improved aging," says Wood.

Staying Active

Regular Brisk Walks and Other Exercise Can Help Prevent Falls in Older Women

New study finds that being active 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week can help prevent falls and injuries in older women.

Older women who exercised the equivalent of 30 minutes a day, five times a week were up to one-third less likely to hurt themselves in a fall.

Brisk walking and moderate or moderate-to-vigorous activity were also all associated with lower risk, the authors wrote.

The findings are encouraging, though not necessarily surprising, says Deborah Kado, MD, a geriatrician at Stanford Health and co-director of the Stanford Longevity Center, both in Palo Alto, California.

“It’s good to see data that suggests that getting more physical activity is associated with a lower risk of falling. Although we often take mobility — the ability to move safely from one place to another — for granted, when you lose it, you really lose your ability to be independent,” says Dr. Kado, who was not involved in the research.

3 Million Older Adults Go to the ER Each Year Because of a Fall

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 1 out of 4 older U.S. adults fall each year, and about three million are treated in the ER, making it a major health concern.

Falls resulting in hip fracture are especially concerning — one meta-analysis suggests that about 3 in 10 older adults who break their hip die within the next year.

- Walking briskly, for recreation or exercise or to get from place to place
- Moderate activity, such as social tennis, moderate intensity exercise classes, and recreational swimming
- Vigorous exercise that made them breathe harder or puff and pant, like aerobics, vigorous cycling, running, and swimming

The subjects were then placed into groups according to the number of minutes they logged: none, less than 150 minutes, 150 to 299 minutes, and 300 minutes or more.

Those amounts were chosen to align with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on physical activity. “Any amount of physical activity is better than none, and more is better,” advises WHO. The organization recommends at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate or vigorous aerobic activity per week.

Participants in the survey answered three questions about falls in the past year:

Staying Active continued

- Did they have a fall to the ground?
- Were they injured because of a fall?
- Did they seek medical attention for a fall-related injury?

About 2,000 women reported falling in the last 12 months, with about half leading to injury and half not.

Being Active for 2.5 Hours a Week Cut Fall Risk

After adjusting for factors that could influence risk, researchers found that doing 150 to 300 minutes of exercise per week reduced fall risk that didn't cause injury by 26 percent and injurious falls by 30 percent. Exercising for more than 300 minutes — five hours — cut the risk by 34 percent for injury-free falls and 23 percent for falls that caused injury.

These findings support multiple exercise trials that show a link between physical activity and reduced fall risk, says Kado. "For example, tai chi has been shown to help older adults reduce their risk of falling," she says.

Tai chi originated as an ancient martial arts practice in China, and the modern practice incorporates slow movements and physical poses with controlled breathing. A meta-analysis of 24 randomized controlled trials published in September 2023 found that tai chi "can effectively reduce the risk of falls in older adults" and improve balance and walking speed.

Walking Reduced Fall Risk by 17 Percent

Brisk walking lowered the risk by 17 percent compared with no exercise at all, according to the authors.

This supports earlier research that shows that walking can help prevent falls. A Japanese study of 90 older adults found that a walking intervention reduced the risk of falls more effectively than balance training.

The Good News: You Don't Have to Exercise 3 Hours a Week to Get Health Benefits

Although the study didn't find any reductions in fall risk in the group with less than 150 minutes a week of activity, that doesn't mean that there's no benefits to small chunks of movement, says Kado.

"The WHO guidelines are terrific, but to tell people they need to get 150 minutes of physical activity a week — I think that can be a deterrent for some people," she says. In the real world, most people aren't getting between 2.5 and 5 hours of exercise a week, says Kado.

But you don't have to meet that threshold to make meaningful improvements in your health, she says. "The truth of the matter is, if you look at data, even the smallest amount of activity has benefits. And the biggest bang for the buck is at the early part of the curve. So basically, if you're a couch potato and don't do any physical activity, if you just increase a little bit, like get up and down and walk around the house every 15 minutes, that will decrease your risk of dying early," says Kado.

Volunteer

Hello Volunteers!

My name is Amy, and I'm thrilled to introduce myself as your new Volunteer Program Coordinator. I come from humble roots—growing up in Durango, Colorado, and journeying across the country as a military wife—until finally finding my way to New Mexico. My path has taught me the immeasurable value of community, and serving others has always been a dream and a passion of mine.

My calling to serve the Senior Community began long ago when my mom was diagnosed with early-onset dementia. It was heartbreaking to see her struggle with maintaining her independence, especially when she could no longer drive or stay connected with those around her. In those moments, I longed for a program—a community—that could step in and provide the support and companionship she desperately needed when I wasn't available. This personal experience, along with the lasting influence of my favorite person, my grandpa, who taught me the meaning of care and giving, has fueled my desire to make a difference.

I am incredibly grateful for the chance to work with such an inspiring and dedicated team. What each of you brings to this program is nothing short of amazing, and together, we're not just helping others—we're building a community that uplifts everyone involved. I look forward to getting to know each of you, learning from your experiences, and working side-by-side to create something bigger than ourselves.

Thank you for welcoming me into this journey. Let's make a difference together!

Dear Friends and Community Members,

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Senior Picnic! It was a joy to see over 350 seniors come together for a day filled with laughter, fantastic music, and plenty of dancing. Your enthusiasm and bright spirits truly lit up the event, making it a celebration of our strong and vibrant community.

A special thank you goes out to our outstanding vendors who helped make the day extra special:

- **Transitions in Senior Care.**
- **A&R Medical Supply**
- **Worth Hearing Center**
- **Beehive Homes**
- **Klarus Senior Care**
- **Sandoval County Community Health**
- **Habitat for Humanity**
- **UNM Sandoval Regional Hospital**
- **Securities Division**
- **Sandoval County Fire and Rescue**
- **Volunteer Transportation Program**
- **The Village @ Alameda**
- **UNM Senior Engagement Program**
- **Oak St Health**
- **Corus Medical**
- **LilyCare of NM**
- **IMA Research Mobile Testing**

We are also incredibly grateful to Don and all the kitchen staff for providing an amazing lunch that left everyone smiling and satisfied. Your culinary dedication was clearly the highlight of the day!

Certificates were presented at our event for the selfless contributions of our volunteers, who generously donated over 11000 hours of service. Your commitment and heart are the backbone of our community celebrations. Also for the outstanding work all of the senior program staff do on a daily basis.

A warm thank you, too, to Jen, Desi, Jayme and all of the Sandoval County program staff for your hard work and support in orchestrating this memorable event. Your tireless efforts ensured that every detail was taken care of, and your dedication is deeply appreciated.

There's nothing quite like live music to bring people together and get the energy flowing. A big thank you goes out to Bueno Suerte for providing the amazing entertainment, they clearly know how to keep the crowd moving!

We're honored to be part of such an incredible community. Thank you for making this day so special—we look forward to celebrating with you again soon!

With heartfelt gratitude,

Sandoval County Senior Division



Sue Angela Adams
Christine Foley
Edwinna Herrera
Deanna O'Donohoe

Theresa Bernal
Theresa Caroline Hedrick
Kay (Wanda) Kiger
Linda Stam

