

Walking and Other Physical Activities Reduce Disability Risk: Seniors on the edge of frailty actually benefit most.

[I make a point to browse for studies that support my beliefs (sound familiar?) At risk of sounding like a broken record, here's an excerpt from the Tufts's Health newsletter of Oct 2014.]

One of the largest and longest-running studies of its kind reports that older adults can improve their chances of being able to keep moving later in life by getting going now. The Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders (LIFE) trial involved 1,635 sedentary men and women, ages 70 to 89, at eight universities and research centers across the country, including Tufts. Those randomly assigned to an exercise program were significantly less likely to become disabled over 2.6 years than those in a control group. The difference was observed in both short-term, acute disability risk and in long-term, chronic disability.

Older adults who demonstrated the lowest levels of physical functioning at the start of the study tended to show the greatest capacity to preserve their mobility through the physical activity program.

"This study for the first time shows conclusively that a regular program of physical activity can preserve independence among older men and women," says Roger A. Fielding, PhD, director of the HNRCA Nutrition, Exercise, Physiology and Sarcopenia Laboratory, who led the Tufts portion of the study. "Interestingly, this was particularly true of older adults who demonstrated the lowest levels of physical functioning at baseline. They tended to show the greatest capacity to preserve their mobility through the physical activity program."

**The first key to getting a regular program going is making it easy. That puts walking at the top of the list. Adding light weights makes it more complete. Adding companionship and regular scheduling keeps it going ( group classes, weight watchers, 12 step programs etc all succeed based on mutual support and engagement). Those of you at Easthampton can join in the regular Tuesday afternoon Walking Club. Is there someone in Northampton who wants to organize Wednesday walkers, Monday mobilizers, Tuesday trampers...? Rob**