

Volunteering may prevent the elderly from becoming frail

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Frailty is a geriatric condition marked by weight loss, low energy and strength, and low physical activity. UCLA researchers followed 1,072 healthy adults aged 70 to 79 between 1988 and 1991 to determine if productive activities -- specifically volunteering, paid work and child care -- prevent the onset of frailty.

At the beginning of the study, 28 percent of participants volunteered, 25 percent performed child care duties and 19 percent worked for pay. After three years, participants in all three activities were found to be less likely to become frail. After accounting for levels of physical and cognitive function, however, only volunteering was associated with lower rates of frailty.

The study suggests that participating in volunteer activities may prevent frailty in [older adults](#). A randomized trial is needed to determine whether volunteering itself prevents the onset of frailty, or if there is something about the types of people who volunteer regularly that keeps them from becoming frail.

The study appears in the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.

Provided by University of California - Los Angeles

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