

Active older adults less likely to experience psychological distress

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In a study examining the relationship between physical activity and physical function, researchers from Australia discovered that older adults who experienced any level of psychological distress were more than four times more likely to experience functional limitation than those who did not. This study is published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Led by Gregory Kolt, PhD, of the University of Western Sydney, School of Science and Health, researchers analyzed data from nearly 100,000 Australian men and women, aged 65 and older, who participated in the 45 and Up Study. Information was sought on self-reported physical activity engagement, physical function, [psychological distress](#), age, smoking history, education, height, and weight.

Psychological distress scores determined by researchers indicated that 8.4% of all older adult participants were experiencing some level of psychological distress, and older adults who experienced a moderate level of psychological distress were the most likely group to experience a functional limitation—almost seven times more likely than those who did not report psychological distress.

Psychological distress has previously been linked to reduced physical activity and increased functional limitation across a range of age groups. A separate study also indicated that approximately 30% of reductions in physical activity, and increases in psychological distress over time, are due to functional limitations and chronic health problems.

"Our findings can influence the emphasis that we place on older adults to remain active," Kolt notes. "With greater levels of physical activity, more positive health gains can be achieved, and with greater physical function (through [physical activity](#)), greater independence can be achieved."

Results also revealed that [older adults](#) who were more physically active were less likely to experience functional limitations.

Provided by Wiley

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