

Seniors often underestimate their frailty, study finds

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Nearly one-quarter had trouble getting out of hospital bed, walking 10 feet and getting back in bed.

(HealthDay)—Many American seniors seen at emergency departments overestimate their mobility, according to a recent study.

Researchers asked seniors who visited an ER to get out of bed, walk 10 feet and return to bed. The investigators found that almost one-quarter of these patients inaccurately assessed their ability to complete these tasks.

Of those who said they could do the tasks without assistance, 12 percent required some help or were unwilling to complete the tasks. Of those who said they could do the tasks without a cane or walker, 48 percent required some help or were unable to complete the tasks, the

investigators found.

Of the seniors who said they could do the tasks with some assistance from another person, 24 percent were unable to do so even with someone helping them, the study revealed.

The findings were published online recently in the journal *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

"Ensuring that [older adults](#) discharged from the [emergency department](#) are able to safely function in their home environment is important because those who are unable to function safely at home are at risk for falls and return ER visits," lead author Dr. Timothy Platts-Mills, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, said in a news release from the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Each year, 20 million people aged 65 and older visit [emergency](#) departments in the United States, the researchers said. That number is expected to rise as [baby boomers](#) continue to age.

Platts-Mills said ER doctors are experts in deciding who can go home and who needs to stay in the hospital. But, sometimes they make these decisions based on what patients say instead of a direct assessment of ability.

"Our results suggest that patient statements are sometimes inaccurate, and, particularly for older adults who need some assistance, directly observing the patient's ambulation can be informative. Of course being able to move around isn't the only determinant of whether an older adult can be safely sent home, but it is a critical piece of information and it's good to get it right," he concluded.

More information: The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging has

more about [seniors and mobility problems](#).

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