

Sports participation reduces fracture risk in older men, according to study

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Researchers from Deakin University's Epi-Centre for Healthy Ageing at Barwon Health have found that participation in sporting activity is associated with a reduced risk of fracture in older men.

Although other research has investigated associations between [fracture risk](#) and any physical [activity](#) such as sport, household, leisure and work-related activity, there has been little research into the specific effects of playing sport on reducing fracture risk.

"Previous studies have shown that regular weight-bearing physical activity can reduce fracture risk through an increase in bone strength, as well as reducing falls risk by improving [muscle strength](#) and balance," said lead researcher Alfred Deakin Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr. Kara Holloway-Kew.

"However, research also shows that structured exercise programs can be difficult to stick to, whereas playing sport is more likely to be maintained because it's chosen for enjoyment and has an associated social aspect.

"That's why we wanted to look specifically at whether sports participation impacts on the risk of fracture in older Australian men.

"We found that men over 60 who participated in sporting activities were less likely to sustain any fracture or major osteoporotic fracture over a six year follow-up period."

The sample of 656 men aged 60-96 reported participation in sports such as lawn bowls, fishing, golf, running, squash, swimming, sailing, tennis, ten pin bowling, table tennis and yachting.

Dr. Holloway-Kew said there were a number of reasons why sporting activity might help reduce the risk of [fractures](#).

"It could be because playing sport simply keeps the person active and fit – improving bone and muscle strength – but it could also be because sports such as lawn bowls and golf require good balance, and that's important for reducing falls," she explained.

She said the findings warranted more research into exactly how sports participation helped reduce the risk of fractures.

The research, published today in the journal *Archives of Osteoporosis*, drew on data from the Epi-Centre for Healthy Ageing's unique longitudinal population study, the Geelong Osteoporosis Study (GOS) and was supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Geelong Regional Medical Foundation, Arthritis Foundation of Australia, Perpetual Trustees, and Amgen Europe (GmbH).

More information: Kara L. Holloway-Kew et al. Sports participation and fracture in older Australian men, *Archives of Osteoporosis* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s11657-018-0459-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11657-018-0459-z)

Provided by Deakin University

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