**Swimming for Senior Citizens Prevents Falls**

As we get older, we begin to lose some of the spring in our step. Our strides are shorter. Our vision begins to blur and it’s harder to balance. Those are some of the factors that make senior living more difficult and cause fall injuries. Because of the high risk, many seniors choose to stay sheltered in their homes. (We’ve spoke about the dangers of withdrawing and the impacts it has on our brains, depression, leg strength and socialization.) This is due to the fear of falling during social or physical activities. Swimming is the exercise with the solution for seniors. It prevents falls, strengthens balance and builds confidence and flexibility!

**How Can Swimming Help Senior Citizens Prevent Falls?**

Swimming is one of the most beneficial exercises for seniors. (What is the difference between load-bearing and non-load bearing exercises?) This is mainly due to using both upper and lower body strength. To perform strokes, one needs to move their arms to propel forward through the water. The legs are used to tread water or kick depending on the type of stroke. Both sets of muscles are used consistently which keeps promoting movement.

A study from Australian professor, Dafna Merom revealed that swimming lowers the risk of falling in seniors. This study monitored how often 1,700 men over the age of 70 fell over a period of four years. The study found that the men who swam regularly were 33% less likely to fall compared to men who exercised in other ways. This is in comparison to golfing, lawn bowling and walking.

The conclusion that was reached was based on testing “postural way.” Participants would stand for 30 seconds. Then researchers would study how much the body moved at the waist to determine how well the men could balance.

Falls are a concern that many seniors have. One out of three seniors in America fall each year and less than half will tell their doctor that they fell. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states many seniors are twice as likely to fall after falling for the first time. Even falling from a lower height can fracture hips. 95% of the time falling sideways is the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. (The leading cause of death from accidents for Seniors are unintended falls. In comparison, the leading cause of death for children {ages 1-14} *is not guns*, however, it’s accidents as well!)

Swimming helps avoid injuries and other serious problems that come with it. It’s good for both acute mental and physical health.

**How Does Swimming Benefit Senior Citizens?**

*Improves heart health:* As we get older, our heart and cardiovascular system get weaker. Swimming makes the heart stronger and larger and improves daily physical endurance. The risk of heart lung diseases decreases as well.

*Low impact on joints:* Jogging and even walking can strain a senior’s joints/ Swimming eases the pressure off the hips, knees and spine. This is because there is less weight to support when submerged in the water. It also eases pain and arthritis.

*Reduce risk of osteoporosis:* This is a concern for elderly women who lose bone mineral density as they age. Swimming makes them less likely to break bones. One in three women over 50 and one fifth of men suffer a bone fracture in their lifetime.

*Increased flexibility:* Water has a low impact on the body. This allows people to move freely without obstruction in the hips, legs and neck. Coincidentally, these body parts are common sources of tightness for seniors.

*Improves mental health:* Swimming reduces stress and increases endorphins which are chemicals in the body that cause happiness. Swimming is a social activity and makes exercise feel less like a chore. It’s a good way to get out of the house too!

Maintaining lower body and core strength is key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle later in life. Seniors are limited in terms of physical activity that can be done regularly. So swimming is the perfect opportunity to help them overcome their fear of falling and reduce discomfort at the same time. Swimming is helpful in building a social life in your “golden years.” A visit to the local pool or YMCA to meet others reduces risks of injury and social isolation.

**SOURCE:**  AquaMobile

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