



Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL)

What is it?

SAIL is group-based, exercise and education program for older adults developed in Washington State with support from the CDC. The program is delivered by health professionals with experience in fitness or exercise science that have completed SAIL training. Exercise sessions are offered for one hour three times per week for up to one year and are combined with falls prevention group education. The exercise sessions include a combination of aerobic conditioning, progressive strength training, and balance exercises shown to impact risk of falling. The education component is delivered as “health tips” during stretching exercises and covers topics such as falls risk and prevention, exercising after illness or injury, home safety, medication safety, footwear, use of gait devices, and strategies for adhering to exercise recommendations.

Who is it for?

Any community-dwelling older adult (age>65) with a fear of falling or prior fall. Because the program focuses heavily on in-person and group-based exercise, it is ideal for individuals who want to stay active and need accountability and structure. SAIL is great for people who may be lonely and could benefit from ongoing social interaction. This can also be a good falls prevention program for individuals who do not want to be labeled as attending a “falls prevention program” or for those that have “graduated out” of A Matter of Balance.

What does it do?

The program focuses on teaching and practicing exercises that improve strength and flexibility and reduce the risk of falling. Original randomized controlled trials of the 12-month program showed a 25% reduction in falls among community-dwelling adults age >65, but lacked statistical power. Significant improvements were seen in balance (Berg Balance), mobility (Timed Up and Go), and leg strength. The more sessions participants attend, the greater the benefits. Follow-up translational study in 2011 showed participant-reported improvements in performance of daily activities, strength, balance, fitness, and flexibility. Eighty percent found the education component helpful.

> For class information and to register, visit yourjuniper.org

How to Discuss With Patients

Older adults highly value their independence and worry about the implications of being labeled as at risk for falling. They may not openly discuss their concerns about falling. As such, it may be necessary for you to initiate the discussion. It is important to highlight to your patient that the goal of this program is to keep him or her independent, active, and at home for as long as possible. You should emphasize that the program will provide education and support that will help your patient stay active and reduce his or her risk of falling. It may also be useful to highlight the social benefits of the program and the fact that many patients like him or her have benefited greatly from the group classes.