A photograph of three people of different ages (two men and one woman) exercising on stationary bikes in a gym. The man in the foreground is older, with grey hair and glasses, wearing a black t-shirt. The woman in the middle has curly brown hair and is wearing a black tank top. The man in the background is bald and wearing an orange and black shirt. They are all leaning forward, pedaling. The background is a bright green wall and a corrugated metal ceiling.

DESIGNING PROGRAMMES FOR OLDER CLIENTS

Find out how you can tailor your workout sessions to accommodate the UK's ageing population

BY PROFESSOR DAWN SKELTON

With increasing longevity, more and more older adults are appearing as 'clients' for personal trainers. In 2011, the Chief Medical Officer recommended new Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults, which includes accumulating 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week, in addition to activities which increase strength at least twice a week, activities which improve balance at least twice a week and avoiding long periods of sitting down.

Yet, most older adults will have a variety of stable health conditions and a plethora of medications. More and more frequently, health authorities are looking to exercise referral to meet the needs of an ageing population. At the moment, the L3 Exercise Referral Qualification barely touches on ageing and the adaptations necessary to work safely and effectively with older people, so those seeing an increasingly older clientele should consider the L3 Older Adult Qualification. Even vulnerable older patients can exercise safely, provided that the exercise programme is appropriately designed and adapted to their needs. There are now a variety of L4 qualifications that address the practicalities of this problem, for example Postural Stability Instructor and Exercise and Fitness After Stroke Instructor.

With up to a third of older adults falling over every year, many older people have taken to avoiding activity, so the engagement of older people in exercise can

sometimes be challenging. Whatever the level of function the older person you want to work with has, it is vital for a longer warm up (to ensure readiness to exercise, loosen stiff joints and prepare the circulation), appropriate consideration to all the components of fitness necessary for maintenance of function (strength, power, endurance and balance), safe progression of exercise over time (to avoid injury and excessive muscle and joint pain), and stretching to improve range of motion. Home exercise programmes to top up gym based work, and of course, plenty of listening and understanding.

Later Life Training have been in existence since 2003, with the aim of improving the lives of older people through evidence based, specialist training provision. To find out more, visit www.laterlifetraining.co.uk



Dawn is an exercise physiologist/health researcher who has published over 50 research papers on exercise for older people. She heads up a research group that specialises in falls prevention, maintenance of function, motivation and support strategies to engage older people in exercise. She has been a Director of Later Life Training since 2003 and strives to get research into practice at every opportunity.

HOW TO IMPROVE BALANCE IN OLDER CLIENTS:

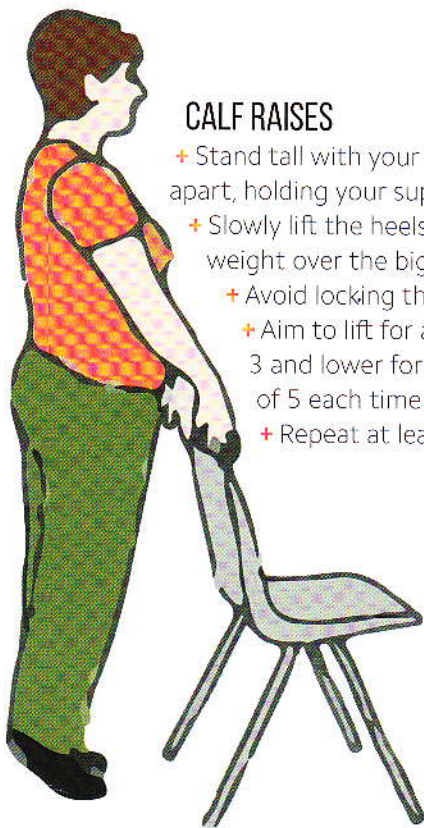
- 1** Firstly, test your client's balance. With a hand hold support nearby try to stand on one leg for 30 seconds without holding on.
- 2** Even if they can do this without holding on or putting a foot down, try now with the eyes closed – most people wobble at this point. This emphasises the importance of vision to balance.
- 3** Balance training starts by reducing the base of support (for example, standing on one leg) but maintaining a static position with eyes looking forward.
- 4** Work on improving range of motion and muscle strength around the ankles.
- 5** Then move on to carefully introducing movement with a small base of support – start by taking small steps on the toes or walking along an invisible line.
- 6** Often balance is compromised when we have to move in directions that are not so normal, so practice backwards walking.
- 7** Try static and simple dynamic balance activities whilst standing on thick mats – this will make the challenge harder.
- 8** Using balance balls and reaching wide whilst maintaining balance seated on a balance ball is a relatively safe way to increase balance.
- 9** Think about three dimensional activities that challenge both balance, vision and inner ear balance (vestibular). Activities such as Tai Chi, dance and yoga which work on core strength as well as balance are great.
- 10** Look at the gym equipment you work with, do any help improve balance? Is there a BalanceMaster wobble boards or thick mats you can use to provide additional balance training?

> BALANCE EXERCISES

Try these four exercise steps with your older clients to help work on their balance.

CALF RAISES

- + Stand tall with your feet hip width apart, holding your support
- + Slowly lift the heels keeping the weight over the big toes
- + Avoid locking the knees
- + Aim to lift for a slow count of 3 and lower for a slow count of 5 each time
- + Repeat at least 10 times

**HEEL TOE WALKING**

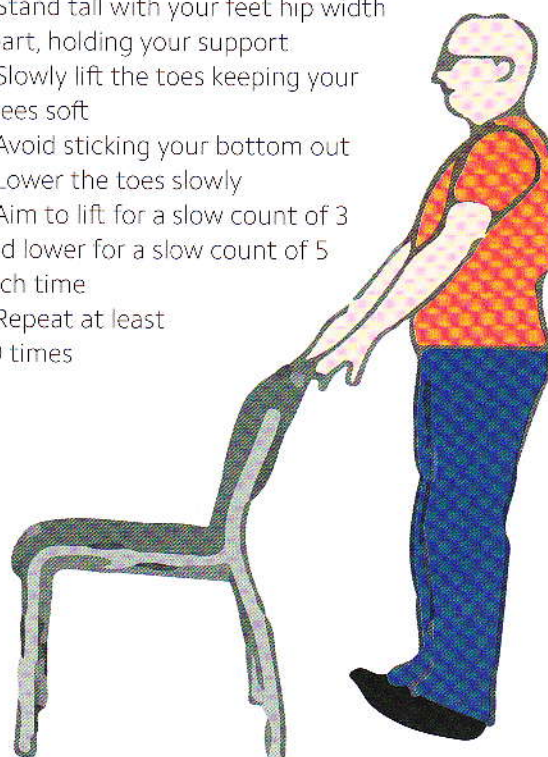
- + Stand tall
- + Walk 10 steps forwards placing one foot directly in front of the other so that the feet form a straight line
- + Look ahead and aim for a steady walking action
- + Take the feet back to hip width apart before turning around then repeat the steps in the other direction

**TOE WALKING**

- + Stand with your feet hip width apart
- + Lift the heels keeping the weight over the big toes
- + Walk 10 steps forwards on your toes
- + Bring the feet level before lowering the heels to the floor
- + Turn around then repeat the toe walking in the other direction
- + Move steadily and with control

**TOE RAISES**

- + Stand tall with your feet hip width apart, holding your support
- + Slowly lift the toes keeping your knees soft
- + Avoid sticking your bottom out
- + Lower the toes slowly
- + Aim to lift for a slow count of 3 and lower for a slow count of 5 each time
- + Repeat at least 10 times



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