

**LIVE STRONGER
FOR LONGER**

PREVENT FALLS & FRACTURES



GETTING APPROVED STRENGTH AND BALANCE CLASSES INTO YOUR COMMUNITY

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You can be part of a national network to help reduce the risk of falls and fall injuries for older people.

Community exercise classes for older people, which focus on improving strength and balance, can reduce the risk of falling by 29%.

If you run an exercise class for older people, or have been thinking of starting, we'd like to hear from you.

ACC, the Ministry of Health, Health Quality & Safety Commission, District Health Boards, Primary Health Organisations, Lead Agencies and many others across the health sector are working together to develop and support, approved community strength and balance classes throughout New Zealand communities.

Lead Agencies are working with new and existing community exercise providers to help them to deliver approved strength and balance classes for older people.

What is an approved community group strength and balance class?

An approved community group strength and balance class is one that meets a set of evidence-based criteria agreed by a Technical Advisory Group to ensure classes are both safe and effective for older adults.

Classes that meet the criteria will then be eligible to use our quality tick of approval logo.



How does my class become approved?

Your class may already meet — or be close to meeting — the criteria. Your Lead Agency will work with you to identify any changes you may need to make. It's a simple process, and your Lead Agency will support you all the way through.

Once approved, your class will be awarded a certificate of approval and you will be eligible to use the quality tick of approval logo on your promotional material.

What are the benefits of becoming an approved community group strength and balance class?

You will be:

- Part of a national network.
- Given FREE training from your Lead Agency to support you to deliver approved community group strength and balance classes.
- Given support to continue to meet the criteria.
- Able to use the quality logo tick of approval and benefit from national promotion.
- Linked to the local communities (GPs, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, podiatrists) and other organisations involved in preventing falls in your region.
- Joining a network of other like-minded professionals and organisations to share success, challenges and ideas, and
- Benefiting from increased referrals to your exercise programme.

What are the benefits for older people in my community?

They will increase their strength and balance, reduce their risk of falls and fall related injuries (e.g. broken hips), continue to contribute to their families and communities and live independent lives.

How will my class be promoted?

You will be provided with posters and brochures to promote your classes, and your Lead Agency and ACC will work together to identify promotional opportunities at a local and national level – including social and online media. Health providers will be advised to look for the quality tick of approval logo and will be referring patients and clients who will benefit from improved leg strength and balance. And of course word of mouth for this age group is a powerful promotional tool.

Can I keep the existing class name?

Absolutely, there is no need to change the name.

Are there health and safety requirements I need to meet?

Yes, there are basic health and safety requirements to meet, including a hazard identification and risk assessment. Your Lead Agency will support you to meet the health and safety requirements.

How do I get involved?

Contact your local Lead Agency.



CRITERIA FOR APPROVED COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND BALANCE CLASSES

The Technical Advisory Group has recommended nine evidence-based criteria. Lead Agencies will work with you and support you to meet the following criteria.

Criteria 1 The purpose of the Programme must be to improve balance and leg strength to reduce the risk of falling.

Your Lead Agency will assess your class and recommend any changes if required.

The changes may include:

- Introduction of leg strength, balance exercises and their progressions, as well as practical, safe and fun ways to include them in classes.
- Leg strengthening exercises include activities such as seated leg extension, side leg raise, rear leg raise, front leg raise, squats, heel raises, toe raises.
- Balance exercises include activities such as a tandem stand, one leg stand, walking on your tip toes, walking on your heels, heel-to-toe walking, sideways walking and backwards walking.
- Balance exercises need to be completed standing and should be progressed over time e.g. reduce base of support, reduce hand support or add in movement of the arms or head.

- Balance exercises should be functionally focused or have relevance to activities of daily living.
- Cardiovascular fitness, upper body exercises and flexibility can be incorporated into the class but they shouldn't dominate the class activities.

Criteria 2 Programmes must include baseline and ongoing assessment of participant's physical function, for example 'timed up and go'.

The Lead Agency will provide training and support to carry out the Timed Up and Go test (known as TUG).

The TUG test provides a great motivational opportunity for participants, as they can see measurable improvement and it provides leaders with feedback about the effectiveness of their classes.

Criteria 3 Programmes must include exercises that provide individually assessed appropriate challenge to balance, and progressive strengthening of lower limbs.

Classes need to be tailored to individual ability and encourage progressive challenge to balance and strengthening of leg muscles. While this criteria may sound demanding, the benefits of an exercise class where people are up out of a chair challenging their balance are clear.

Your Lead Agency will ensure you will receive practical training and tips on how to individualise and add progressive strength and balance challenge in a group setting.

Criteria 4 Balance exercises should be a minimum of one third of the total exercises, and should be done standing with progression to reduced base of support.

Your Lead Agency will provide you with safe and fun ideas on how to challenge balance within a class setting safely. There are hundreds of ways to challenge the balance within a class setting. Balance exercises should be done standing with progressions to reduce base of support. Balance exercises will need to be modified to suit all abilities.

Criteria 5 Programmes should include at least one hour-long group exercise session and, using resources provided, completion of home based exercises every week for a duration of 10 weeks.

- Classes should be one hour long (or work up to one hour long for those with certain medical conditions), and can include time for explanations and falls prevention education.
- As well as coming to a class once a week, participants need to be encouraged to do the exercises at home (ideally daily or at least once a week).

Criteria 6 Programmes should have a strategy to support ongoing regular physical activity or participation.

- Ideally people will continue to attend classes long term. If the class becomes too easy or too hard for a participant, the Lead Agency can assist in finding a more suitable class or activity for them.

The **Lead Agencies** role is to support class instructors and provide information and support at no cost. They will be responsible for ensuring the following criteria are met:

Criteria 7 Instructors should be specially trained and have appropriate supervision (but need not be clinically trained).

Lead Agencies will ensure that the class instructors/leaders are specifically trained to deliver safe and effective falls prevention exercise classes. Many class instructors will already meet these criteria including volunteer peer-leaders in many cases.

Criteria 8 Participants may be enrolled in the programme through a health professional or through self or community referrals.

Criteria 9 Any inclusion or exclusion criteria must still ensure the programme is available to people at increased risk of falling.

Inclusion criteria will ensure the programme is available to people at increased risk of falling, while exclusion criteria will ensure those unsuitable for these programmes are directed to more appropriate services or health professional advice.

If you have doubts with regards to a person's ability to safely perform the exercises, a request for medical clearance before exercising is encouraged. Further advice can be sought from your Lead Agency also.

**For more information visit: www.livestronger.org.nz or
contact your local Lead Agent.**

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