

New research for fall prevention looking for participants to get involved

Do you have a history of falling, or at risk of falling? A new aquatic exercise research study is looking for participants to get involved.

Aqua Steps, is a new exercise programme, developed by experts in the field from the University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University and Edinburgh Leisure. The programmes are delivered as part of a research project, and aims to improve the balance, strength, endurance, confidence, and independence of the participants.

One-third of people aged 65 years or over fall every year with more than 4 million people falling each year in the UK, which is approximately 11,000 people daily. Falls reduce quality of life, lead to nursing home admissions, cause about 90% of hip fractures and half of deaths due to injury. The annual NHS and social care cost for fall-related injuries is more than £3.3 billion.

Older adults who have some of the following: feel unstable/unsteady; have poor gait or balance, have a history of falling or are at risk of falling, have low bone density or previous fracture are encouraged to get in touch to take part.

Dr Stelios Psycharakis, Senior Lecturer in Biomechanics at the University of Edinburgh said: "Aquatic exercise can improve

many of these factors and has many benefits. For example, the buoyancy of the water reduces spine and joint loads and allows exercising without having to support one's weight, while the pressure of the water on the body assists with balance and mobility which may be preferable for people who find land exercise challenging or have high risk/fear of falling.

Amy Fastier, Health Development Officer (Falls Prevention) at Edinburgh Leisure said: "We're delighted to be working in partnership with the University of Edinburgh. The study is looking to see if water-based classes have similar benefits as land based as there is no current research on water based activity in preventing falls.

"Participants don't need to be strong swimmers as the exercises take place in shallow water and everyone will be encouraged to work at their own pace during the class, guided by our expert instructors. People who may have difficulty getting in and out of the pool without some help, are welcome to bring along a family member, carer, or friend. Pools hoists (for safe entry/exit from the water) are available at swimming pools and will be used when necessary."

High-quality research on aquatic exercise in fall prevention is scarce. This programme will deliver an aquatic intervention for people with high risk of falls. The data we get will be used to look at the programme's effects on falls risk and compare it with an established land-based programme, Steady Steps, which is delivered by Edinburgh Leisure to see whether there are similar benefits to the existing research on land-based classes.

The classes are free, with the cost covered by funding provided by the Chief Scientist Office for Scotland. The exercise sessions will take place in the shallow water only in one of five swimming pools in Edinburgh and Midlothian*. The pools are Warrender Swim Centre (Marchmont), Dalry Swim Centre (Dalry), Ainslie Park Leisure Centre (Inverleith/Pilton),

Glenogle Swim Centre (Stockbridge) and Penicuik Leisure Centre (Penicuik).

Participants would be required to attend for two sessions per week (30 minutes in the water for each session) over a course of 16 weeks. Different time slots will be available.

The programme will start in the first week of March 2024 (last week of March for Penicuik).

Interested parties willing to take part should contact the Aqua Steps administrator, Diane Chirnside on AquaSteps@ed.ac.uk and will be assessed for their willingness/ability to participate and complete the intervention. Spaces are limited so people are encouraged to get in touch as soon as possible, and ideally by early to mid-February.



New Aquasteps research seeking participants