

# Can online stability ball classes change older adults' perceptions of balance and body image?



For older adults, physical activity that challenges balance and muscle strengthening activity is recommended at least twice a week to keep active and healthy as we age.

Online fitness offerings have become more common since the lockdowns due to COVID-19.



The purpose of this study was to investigate body image and balance-related perceptions (fear of falling and falls efficacy) after a 4-week, 3 day per week online stability ball class program among older adults 60+ years of age.



29 women and 8 men, age range 60-81 years participated in this study  
Healthy body mass index, already physically active (5+ days/week on average)  
Low in fear of falling and high in balance confidence  
Satisfaction with body function neutral but slightly dissatisfied with appearance



Classes were about an hour long with a mixture of standing, seated on the ball, and floor exercises. They were completed at home, and each week, classes got more challenging.

After 4-weeks:

- Satisfaction with appearance significantly increased
- No change in balance confidence or fear of falling
- High enjoyment of the classes overall
- High average weekly adherence (93%)
- Moderate interest in continuing the program for the next 4-weeks



For older adults (60+ years of age), the stability ball can be used safely at home to engage in muscle strengthening and balance activities. Long term use may strengthen beliefs on overall balance abilities and promote positive body image.

*"I measured [an] inch off waist and felt that I tightened upper arms and the tops of my thighs. I didn't ever feel breathless but could do the workouts. The instructions were easy to follow."*

*"The ball exercises challenge my balance, core, mind and provided me with cardio at the same time, all the while enjoying the exercises."*