



Dance to health

DESCRIPTION OF A DANCE TO HEALTH SESSION

A Dance to Health session integrates the falls-prevention exercise principles into fun, sociable and creative dance. Each session lasts 90 minutes. Some use props, such as scarves and octabands (see photo). Every session is followed by 30 minutes for refreshments, socialising and review of progress. They all include:

- ✓ A warm-up
- ✓ Introduction of a dance idea/theme/imagined scenario
- ✓ Music that fits the theme or is suggested by the group
- ✓ Opportunity to be creative individually and together as a group
- ✓ A sharing of creative outcomes
- ✓ A cool down



A PSI/FaME programme for primary falls prevention will include seven elements:

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|------------|---------------|-------------|---|
| ✓ Strength | ✓ Endurance | ✓ Tai Chi | ✓ 'Backwards chaining' (the ability to get down to and back up from the floor safely) |
| ✓ Balance | ✓ Flexibility | ✓ Floorwork | |

An Otago programme for secondary falls prevention will focus on strength and balance and will incorporate the use of ankle weights, as participants' strength increases.

Why it works

Dance to Health sessions are not based on established routines, so that those with no previous dance experience are not excluded. Dance activities spring from everyday movements. Participants are encouraged to express themselves through improvisation and imagined scenarios. The dance artists build the routines in partnership with the participants, inviting ideas and suggestions for the choreography. Programmes are progressive, as participants gain strength and confidence. They are person-centred, so each movement can be adjusted to suit individual capabilities.

Meeting with others, moving to music and celebrating joint accomplishment enables participants to forget their discomfort, which they are often not able to do with repetitive exercise. Older people tell us it works because it enhanced their feelings of control over their movements. Participants like the attractiveness of dance, the sense of achievement and increased confidence, and opportunities for expression, creativity and performing to family and friends and other Dance to Health groups.

"Dance to Health is all new to me. It's not like anything I've done in my life before. But I love it and I look forward to coming twice a week. I enjoy doing it and dancing doesn't feel like I'm forcing myself to do exercise. I couldn't have done what I can do now 6 months ago."