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Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Frailty Awareness

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 049

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Introduction

Frailty is a health condition that commonly affects older adults and results in reduced strength, endurance and resilience. People living with frailty are more vulnerable to illness, falls, injury and changes in their physical or mental health. Even a minor illness or change in routine can have a significant impact on their wellbeing and independence.

Frailty is **not** an inevitable part of ageing. While the risk of developing frailty increases with age, early recognition, person-centred support and appropriate interventions can help individuals maintain their independence, improve their quality of life and reduce the risk of avoidable deterioration.

Care staff play an important role in recognising the early signs of frailty, monitoring changes in an individual's condition and reporting concerns promptly so that appropriate care and support can be provided.

Why This Resource Matters

Understanding frailty awareness helps care staff to:

- Recognise the early signs and indicators of frailty.
 - Support individuals to remain as independent as possible.
 - Reduce the risk of falls, injury and avoidable deterioration.
 - Promote good nutrition, hydration and mobility.
 - Recognise when an individual's needs have changed.
 - Improve quality of life through person-centred care.
 - Work effectively with colleagues and healthcare professionals to support safe care.
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Key Message

Frailty is not simply a consequence of getting older. By recognising the signs early, promoting independence, encouraging good nutrition and hydration, supporting safe mobility and reporting changes promptly, care staff can help individuals living with frailty maintain their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Recognising Frailty

Frailty can affect people in different ways and often develops gradually over time. Some individuals may remain independent while needing a little extra support, while others may become increasingly vulnerable to illness, falls and changes in their physical or mental health.

Care staff should be aware of the signs that may suggest an individual is becoming frail. Early recognition allows appropriate support to be put in place and can help reduce the risk of avoidable deterioration.

Common signs of frailty include:

- Reduced strength or muscle weakness.
- Slower walking speed or reduced mobility.
- Frequent falls or an increased risk of falling.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Tiredness or low energy levels.
- Difficulty recovering from illness or infection.
- Reduced confidence when moving around.
- Needing more support with everyday activities.
- Increased confusion or changes in physical or mental wellbeing following minor illness.

Recognising these signs early enables care staff to provide timely support and report concerns appropriately.

Supporting Individuals Living with Frailty

Care staff can help by:

- Encouraging safe movement and regular physical activity where appropriate.
- Promoting good nutrition and adequate hydration.
- Supporting independence while providing assistance when needed.
- Following individual care plans and risk assessments.
- Monitoring for changes in health, mobility or behaviour.
- Helping create a safe environment that reduces the risk of falls.
- Encouraging individuals to attend healthcare appointments where appropriate.
- Reporting any concerns or changes in condition promptly.

Small, consistent actions can make a significant difference in maintaining an individual's health, confidence and independence.

Remember

Frailty is a long-term condition that requires person-centred support rather than simply focusing on age. By recognising the early signs, encouraging healthy daily routines and reporting concerns promptly, care staff can help individuals remain safer, healthier and more independent for longer.

Professional Responsibilities

Every care worker has a responsibility to recognise the signs of frailty and provide safe, compassionate and person-centred support. While frailty cannot always be prevented, early recognition and appropriate interventions can help maintain independence, reduce the risk of deterioration and improve an individual's quality of life.

As a care professional, you should always:

- Observe individuals for changes in mobility, strength, weight and overall wellbeing.
- Follow individual care plans and risk assessments.
- Encourage safe movement and independence wherever possible.
- Promote good nutrition and adequate hydration.
- Help reduce the risk of falls by maintaining a safe environment.
- Record observations accurately and report any concerns promptly.
- Respect each individual's choices, dignity and independence.
- Work with colleagues and healthcare professionals to provide coordinated, person-centred care.

Supporting people living with frailty requires patience, empathy and a proactive approach to maintaining their health and wellbeing.

When to Raise Concerns

You should report concerns immediately if:

- An individual experiences repeated falls or a sudden decline in mobility.
- You notice unexplained weight loss or reduced appetite.
- There are significant changes in strength, balance or confidence.
- An individual becomes unusually tired, withdrawn or less able to manage everyday activities.
- Recovery from illness is slower than expected.
- You notice any sudden deterioration in physical or mental health.
- Existing care plans or risk assessments no longer reflect the individual's current needs.

Prompt reporting helps ensure that appropriate assessments and support can be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

Good Practice Reminder

Frailty affects every individual differently. By recognising early signs, promoting healthy daily routines, encouraging independence and communicating concerns promptly, care staff can play an important role in helping individuals remain safe, active and as independent as possible while enhancing their overall quality of life.

Summary

Frailty is a long-term health condition that increases an individual's vulnerability to illness, injury and reduced independence. Early recognition, person-centred support and proactive care can help individuals maintain their health, wellbeing and quality of life while reducing the risk of avoidable deterioration.

Care staff play a vital role in recognising the signs of frailty, encouraging healthy daily routines, promoting independence and reporting concerns promptly. By working collaboratively with colleagues, healthcare professionals and families, care staff can help ensure individuals receive the right support at the right time.

Frailty Awareness Checklist

- ✓ Observe for changes in mobility, strength and balance.
 - ✓ Encourage safe movement and independence wherever possible.
 - ✓ Promote good nutrition and adequate hydration.
 - ✓ Monitor for unintentional weight loss or reduced appetite.
 - ✓ Follow individual care plans and risk assessments.
 - ✓ Record observations accurately and report changes promptly.
 - ✓ Help reduce the risk of falls by maintaining a safe environment.
 - ✓ Treat every individual with dignity, compassion and respect.
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Further Information

For further guidance on frailty and supporting older adults, visit:

NHS – Frailty

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/frailty/>

NICE – Multimorbidity and Frailty

<https://www.nice.org.uk>

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

<https://www.cqc.org.uk>

Age UK

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk>

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Related Knowledge Hub Resources

- Resource 014 – Preventing Falls in Care Settings – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff
- Resource 017 – Person-Centred Care Awareness – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff
- Resource 019 – Oral Health & Mouth Care Awareness – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff
- Resource 020 – Pressure Ulcer Prevention Awareness – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff
- Resource 022 – Recognising and Responding to Pain in Care Settings – A Practical Guide for Care Staff
- Resource 034 – Recognising Deterioration in Care Settings – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Related FlexiLearnHub Courses

- Person-Centred Care Awareness
- End of Life Care Awareness
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