

SENIOR ATHLETE FITNESS EXAM

STRENGTH | BALANCE | CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH | FLEXIBILITY

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The Senior Athlete Fitness Exam, known as SAFE, is a battery of tests utilized to test fitness and identify potential risk factors in high functioning senior athletes.



The SAFE was developed by physical therapist and Associate Professor, Dr. Becca Jordre at the University of South Dakota and is regularly used at state and national Senior Games events.
Thank you to Dr. Jordre for sharing her presentation!



Senior Athlete Fitness Exam (SAFE)		Goal	
A tool for the fitness screening of high-functioning senior athletes			
CARDIOVASCULAR			
Blood Pressure	mmHg	<120/80 mm Hg	
Oxygen Saturation	%	≥95	
Heart Rate	beats/min	60-100 bpm	
Waist Circumference (inches)		♂ ≤ 35" ♀ ≤ 40"	
Waist to Hip Ratio		♂ ≤ .8 ♀ ≤ .9	
STRENGTH (circle dominant hand)			
Grip Strength Kg-Right	kg	See chart for age and gender norms – score dominant	
Grip Strength Kg-Left	kg		
Chair Stand	sec	≥9 seconds	
FLEXIBILITY			
Shoulder (degrees)	R L	160-180 degrees	
Ankle (degrees)	R L	10-20 degrees -15 indicates fall risk	
Hip (degrees)	R L	0 degrees	
Posture (needs pillow to achieve neutral supine)	Circle yes if pillow is needed: YES NO		"NO"
BALANCE			
All trials measured in seconds up to 30 seconds.			
Single leg eyes open (Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best))	1 2 3	30 seconds Indicates increased fall risk in community dwelling older adults	
Single leg eyes closed (Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best))	1 2 3	15 sec Indicates increased fall risk in senior athletes	
Single leg on foam eyes open (Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best))	1 2 3	>15 sec Indicates increased fall risk in senior athletes	
Usual Gait Speed (meters/second)	10 meters	sec	1.2-1.46 m/s
Fast Gait Speed (meters/second)	10 meters	sec	>2 m/s

Contact Becca Jordre, Becca.Jordre@usd.edu prior to conducting SAFE screening for detailed norms and instructions.

SENIOR GAMES ATHLETES EXCEED ALL NORMS

Cardiovascular exercise

~5.5 hours/week.

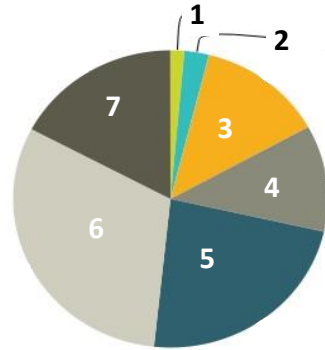
Strength training

~1 hour/week.

RESULTS FROM
2,340 SENIOR
ATHLETES

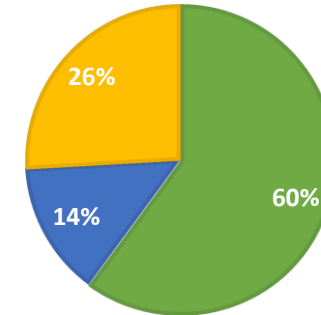


Senior Athletes: Days per Week of Purposeful Exercise²



SENIOR ATHLETE SPORT HISTORY

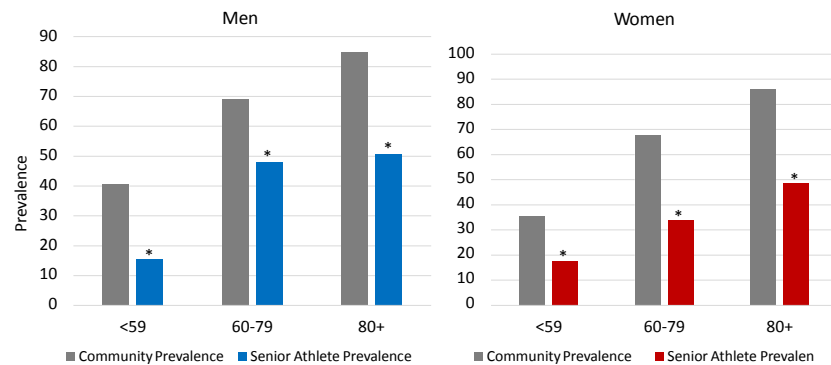
- Lifelong athlete, never stopped
- Started competing as an adult, before age 50
- Started competing as an adult, after age 50



MANY HAVE ALWAYS IDENTIFIED AS ATHLETES



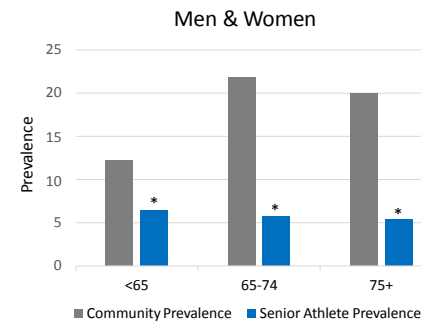
Cardiovascular Disease Prevalence is Significantly Lower in Senior Games Athletes than Community-Dwelling Seniors³



Comparisons made with binomial approximation to the normal. * Indicates significance at <.0001



Prevalence of Type II Diabetes Mellitus is Significantly Lower in Senior Athletes³



Comparisons made with binomial approximation to the normal. * Indicates significance at <.0001

- The prevalence of diabetes in Senior Athletes stays near 5% regardless of age group.
- Athletes that compete in cardiovascular sports such as running are 74.4% less likely to have diabetes than athletes in sports with less cardiovascular challenge such as bowling.



Five Times Sit to Stand Test

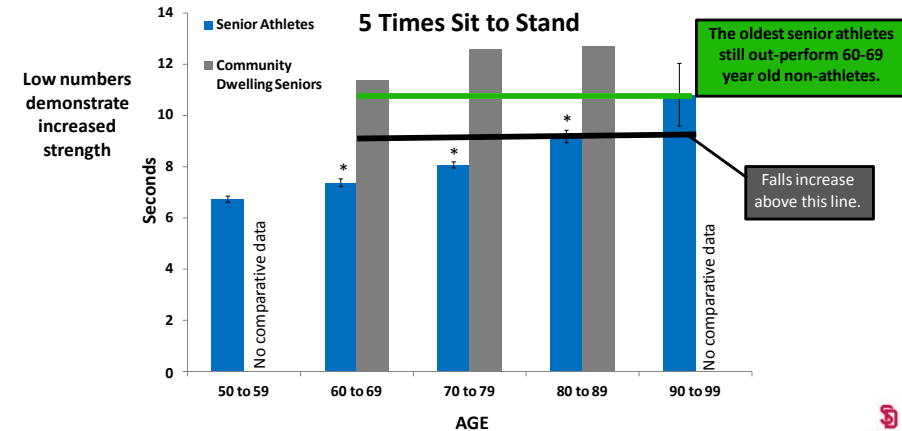
- Predicts disability⁴ and falls.⁵
- A valid measure of lower extremity strength.⁶
- A strong screening tool to predict mobility decline 2 years in advance.⁷



- Standard chair height
- Arms crossed to avoid use
- Sit to stand 5 times
- Timed from “go” to final seated position after 5th stand.



Senior Athletes Demonstrate Significantly Superior Strength^{8,9}



* Indicates significance at <.0001



Grip Strength

Hand grip strength is predictive of mortality,^{10,11} functional limitations and disability¹² 20-25 years in advance. This appears to be a stronger predictor in men.¹⁰

Associated with upper and lower limb strength.¹³

Supported as a screen to predict mobility disability in older adults.¹⁴

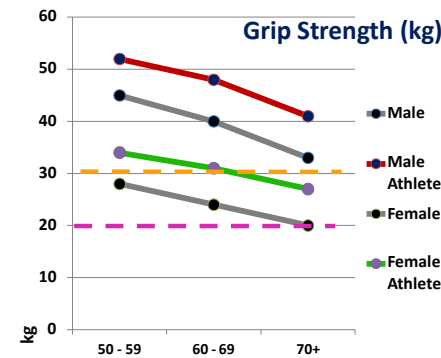
Older-adults with lower grip strength appear to have a lower health-related quality of life.¹⁵



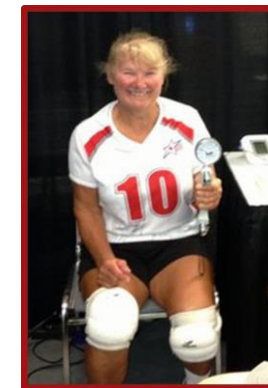
- Hydraulic hand dynamometer
- Average of 3 trials
- Stronger hand used for analysis
- Measured in kg



Senior Athletes Demonstrate Significantly Superior Grip Strength¹⁶



Threshold for sarcopenia¹⁷
 Men (<30 kg) —
 Women (<20 kg) - -



* All differences between senior athletes and non-athletes were significant with $p < .0001$. Cohen's d effect sizes ranged from .71-1.22.



Balance Testing in Senior Athletes



- ✓ Best of 3 trials
- ✓ Time stopped at 30 seconds
- ✓ Preferred leg

Single Leg Stance Eyes Open

- A predictor of falls in community dwellers if below 30 seconds.¹⁸
- Senior athletes average 24 seconds.
- Senior athlete scores were not predictive of falls.⁹
- Senior athletes need a more difficult test.

Single Leg Stance Eyes Closed

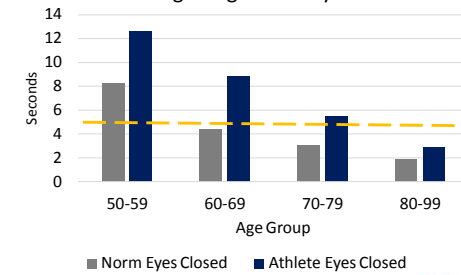
- Senior athletes exceed all norms.¹⁹
- A better predictor of falls in senior athletes.
- Cut score for falls is 5.51 seconds.⁹

Single Leg Stance on Foam

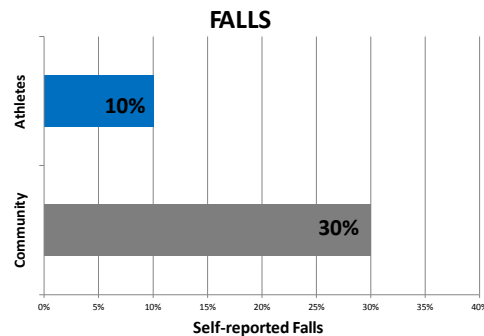
- No norms available
- A predictor of falls in senior athletes.⁹
- Cut Score for falls 14.27 seconds.⁹
- A combination of eyes closed and stance on foam was the best predictor of falls.⁹



Single Leg Stance Eyes Closed



Senior Athletes Demonstrate Superior Balance and Fewer Falls⁹



Gait speed is a physical performance measure useful in identifying **fall risk**, functional impairments, physical fitness and quality of life in older adults. It's utility is so great that it has been coined a **"vital sign"** for clinical purposes.²⁰

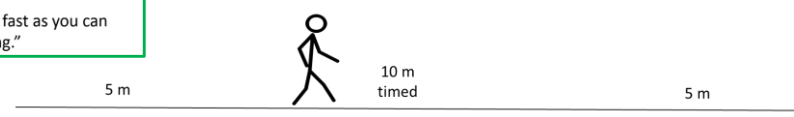


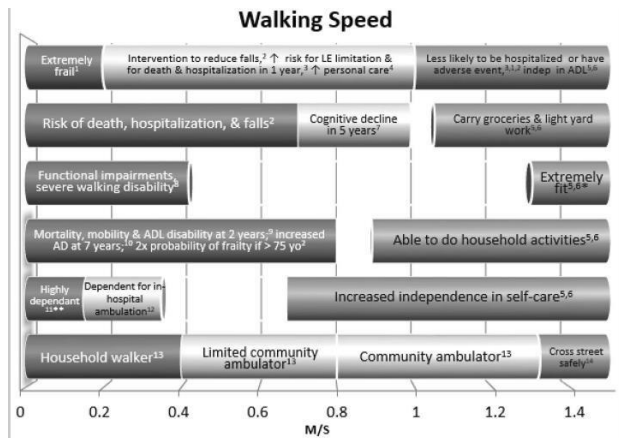
Gait speed was measured on a 10 meter walkway with an additional 5 meter acceleration and deceleration zone.

Usual: "Walk your normal pace, as if walking to the mailbox."

Fast: "Walk as fast as you can without running."

- A decline of .03 m/s per year in gait speed is considered rapid and increases mortality risk in older adults by 90%.²¹
- A usual gait speed of <1 meter/sec indicates a high risk of adverse health outcomes.²²
- **Gait speed of ≥ 1.32 m/s allows an older adult to safely cross an intersection.**²³
- Contributing variables: postural control, strength, aerobic capacity, proprioception, vision.²³
- Fast gait speed in a valid predictor of disability in aging adults.²⁴

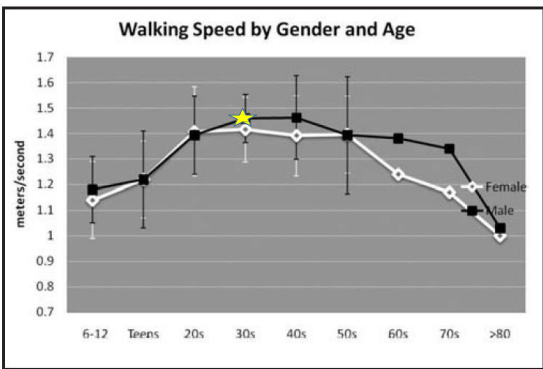
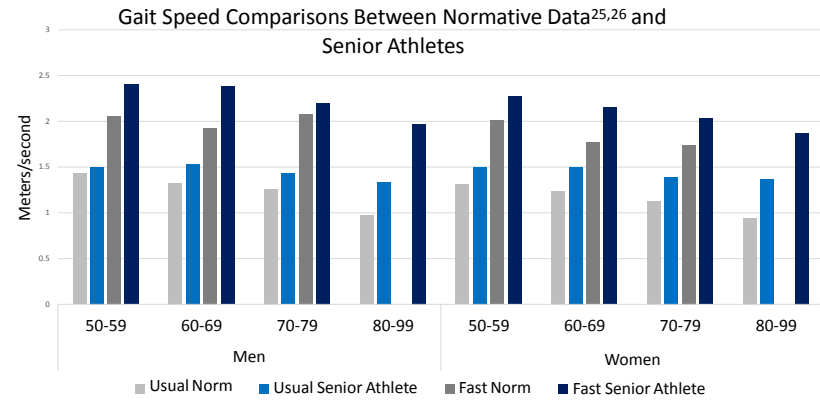




Depiction of Walking Speeds and the Associated Outcomes.²³

Middleton A, Fritz SL, Lusardi M. Walking speed: the functional vital sign. J Aging Phys Act. 2015 Apr;23(2):314-22.

Senior Athletes demonstrate significantly faster gait speeds



Senior athletes walk, on average, near the speed of adults in their 30's. 1.43 m/s★

Figure 2. Self selected walking speed categorized by gender and age (6-12 and teens,⁴⁷ 20s-50s,⁴² & 60s-80s⁴⁸).²⁰
 Fritz S, Lusardi M. White paper: "walking speed: the sixth vital sign". J Geriatr Phys Ther. 2009;32(2):46-9. Erratum in: J Geriatr Phys Ther. 2009;32(3):110.

Senior Athlete Usual Gait Speed		Senior Athlete Fast Gait Speed	
N	Mean (meters/sec)	N	Mean (meters/sec)
1612	1.43 (SD 0.22)	1365	2.18 (SD 0.44)

In the general population gait speed below 1.0 meters/second suggests the possibility of underlying pathology and the need for further evaluation.²²

In Senior Athletes the threshold for concern of underlying disease is 1.36 m/s usual gait speed.²⁷

Gait speeds are lower in senior athletes with ≥2 health conditions.²⁷

Cardiovascular disease and diabetes mellitus seem to have the greatest impact on gait speed in Senior Athletes.²⁷



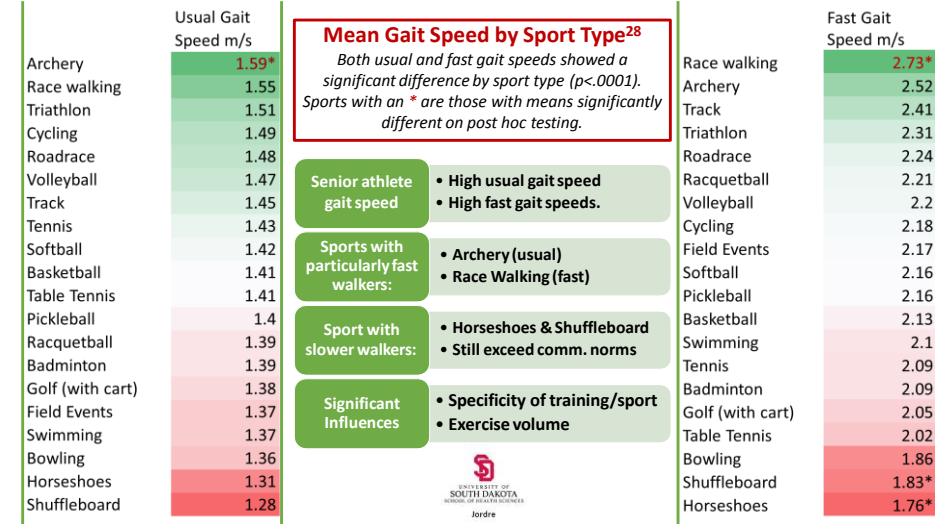
The Influence of Sport Intensity on Gait Speed²⁸

	Usual Gait Speed Mean (meters/second)	Fast Gait Speed Mean (meters/second)	p
Active Sport Athletes	1.44	2.21	<.0001
Less Active Sport Athletes	1.35	1.90	<.0001

Active Sports: Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Cycling, Field Events, Pickleball, Race walking, Racquetball, Roadrace (5K, 10K), Softball, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis, Track, Triathlon, Volleyball

Less Active Sports: Bowling, Golf (with cart), Horseshoes, Shuffleboard

Both groups demonstrate better than average gait speed. Thus, any activity is better than being sedentary but more intense activity may be even better.

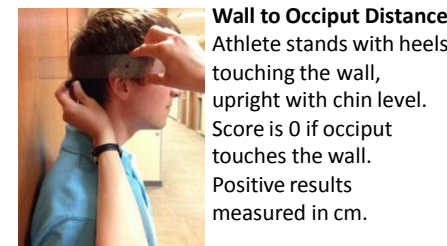
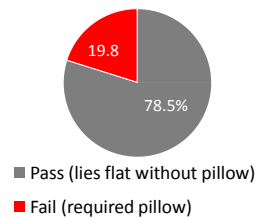


Foam Pillow Test (FPT) for Forward Head Posture

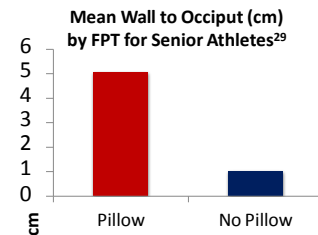
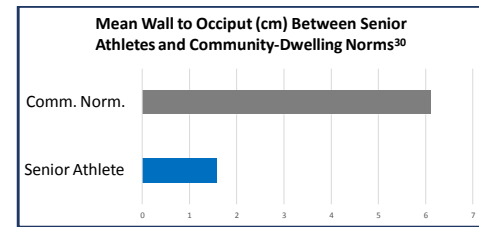
- For senior athletes unable to lie flat for testing. A foam pillow was utilized, as needed, and documented.
- Utilized to screen for forward head posture and hyperkyphosis.
- The majority of athletes demonstrated the ability to lie flat on a firm surface in neutral.
- With a hyperkyphotic spine the neck must extend to meet the table.



Athlete Results of Foam Pillow Test (FPT)²⁹



Wall to Occiput Distance
Athlete stands with heels touching the wall, upright with chin level. Score is 0 if occiput touches the wall. Positive results measured in cm.



A Wall to Occiput distance of more than 0 cm suggests the need for further examination for **osteoporosis** or potential **compression fracture**.^{31,32}



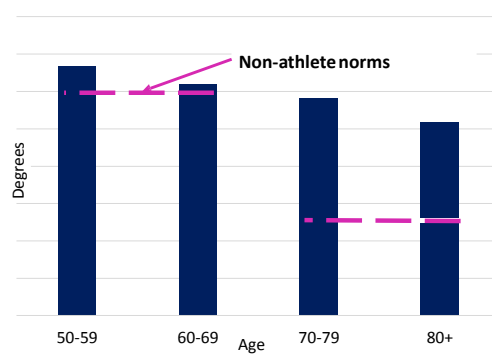
Senior Athletes enjoy a more upright posture.

Shoulder Flexion Critical for:

- Overhead reaching
- Grooming
- Spiking a volleyball
- Blocking a hit/shot
- Shooting a basketball
- Swimming



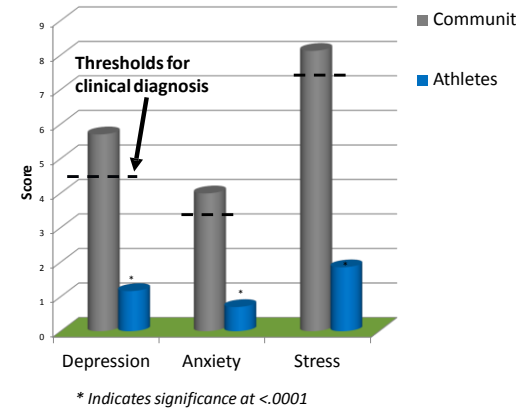
Senior Athlete Shoulder Flexion²⁹



Flexibility does decline with each decade but stays significantly above that of the average older adult ($p < .0001$).³³



Psychological Health: Senior Athletes Demonstrate Lower Levels of Depression, Anxiety and Stress²



- Results of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21)
- Athletes demonstrate significantly lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress than non-clinical normative data.
- Results in senior athletes did not vary based on reported exercise volume, socioeconomic variables or co-morbidities.



Senior Athletes engage in purposeful exercise at rates much higher than their peers.

As a group they enjoy superior:

- **CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH**
 - STRENGTH
- **BALANCE & FEWER FALLS**
 - MOBILITY
 - POSTURE
 - FLEXIBILITY
- **MENTAL HEALTH**

Decline still occurs with age, but appears to start from a higher set point which allows many athletes to stay above the threshold of disability and disease as they age.



Senior Athlete Fitness Exam (SAFE)		Goal
<i>A tool for the fitness screening of high-functioning senior athletes</i>		
CARDIOVASCULAR		
Blood Pressure	mmHg	<120/<80 mm Hg
Oxygen Saturation	%	≥95
Heart Rate	beats/min	60-100 bpm
Waist Circumference (inches)		♀ ≤ 35"
		♂ ≤ 40"
Waist to Hip Ratio		♀ ≤ .8
		♂ ≤ .9

Note- consider medication effects on BP and HR!
Consider when you complete the exam and if they have exercised before and recovered yet.

STRENGTH (circle dominant hand)			
Grip Strength Kg-Right		kg	See chart for age and gender norms – score dominant
Grip Strength Kg-Left		kg	
Chair Stand		sec	<9 seconds

FLEXIBILITY			
Shoulder (degrees)	R	L	168-180 degrees
Ankle (degrees)	R	L	10-20 degrees <5 indicates fall risk
Hip (degrees)	R	L	0 degrees
Posture (needs pillow to achieve neutral supine)	Circle yes if pillow is needed. YES NO		"NO"

BALANCE				
All trials measured in seconds up to 30 seconds.				
Single leg eyes open Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best)	1	2	3	30 seconds indicates increased fall risk in community dwelling older adults
Single leg eyes closed Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best)	1	2	3	>5 sec indicates increased fall risk in senior athletes
Single leg on foam eyes open Score is the BEST of 3 trials (circle best)	1	2	3	>15 sec indicates increased fall risk in senior athletes
Usual Gait Speed (meters/second)	10 meters	sec	m/s	1.2-1.46 m/s
Fast Gait Speed (meters/second)	10 meters	sec	m/s	>2 m/s



Contact Becca Jordre, Becca.Jordre@usd.edu prior to conducting SAFE screening for detailed norms and instructions.

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