

Do the COVID-19 restrictions currently in place affect the physical functioning of older people?

You are invited to take part in a research study to address the above question, but this is a voluntary decision. Before you decide if you want to take part it is important to explain why the project is being conducted and what it will entail for you as a participant. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish, ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. It is important you fully understand what is expected of you if you decide you want to take part, so please take your time.

This document was last updated on 20-5-2020. To check for any changes made during the project, please check www.waru.org.uk/self-monitoring for updated documents and related materials.

The purpose of the project

The Corona virus COVID-19 is now (May 2020) affecting the daily lives of many older people, since mid-March. The impact of COVID-19 is affecting everyone, and not just those infected; This project is focussing on older people who have had to change their lifestyle, and not on the individuals that have been infected. It's about the impact of the restrictions the government puts in place to control the spread of COVID-19. We want to find out if it has affected your level of

physical activity, or whether you now actually have focused more on doing exercises at home because you had the time, for example.

We want to see how a change in daily activities impacts on the performance of these activities, such as walking speed, strength, and other tasks you commonly do throughout the day. These tasks are normally assessed in a controlled environment, such as hospital or research setting. But, as we can't do that, we want to do this project, where we are asking you to self-assess yourself in your own home. We would like to monitor for the period of the COVID-19 outbreak and over the course of the restrictions, which can change in response to the COVID-19. This will allow us to see how different level of restrictions affect you and allows us to see if/how your performance will change over time.

In short

To summarize, if you decide to take part, you will do a range of physical tasks to assess yourself, while being supervised by another member of your household. This will take around 30 minutes at least, and you can opt to do more (additional) tasks, which could take another 60 minutes. You should do these tasks at least once a month, but you are encouraged to do them more frequently (but no more than once a week).

Participation is voluntary

Participation is completely voluntary, and you can decide whether or not to take part. Recruitment for the project is not 'targeted' specifically at you, so you might receive this information sheet randomly. If you do decide to take part, you can have this information sheet to keep. If you do decide to take part, the act of returning the results sheet is your way of giving approval for us to

use your data for further analysis. In other words, you consent to taking part by providing us your results.

If at some point within the study you wish to withdraw, you can do so without question or having to give reason. Withdrawal will not affect you in any way, and you can also ask us to remove your existing data.

Decide if you can and should take part

The project is aimed at older adults over the age of 60 years, with no upper age limit imposed. You must live independently in your home (regardless of whether you live with someone else, it's about being able to walk, get up from a chair, and do household chores) and not residing in a care home, residential home, or hospital. Note: You can be living independently even though your spouse, partner or other member of the family are residing in the same house). Care homes, residential homes, hospitals and similar environments are excluded because the tasks that are part of the project are not suitable to be done safely there.

You cannot take part in this project if you live alone, as assistance is required to support the activities; under present restrictions this support would need to be provided by a member of the same household.

Even if you are interested, you should also consider chronic conditions or recent major health problem, such as cardiovascular health, osteoarthritis, recent joint replacement, cataract removal, dementia, stroke, motor movement issues and those with a history of falls and fall related fractures etc. These could be good reasons to not take part. However, as participation is voluntary and you are

assessing yourself, you should decide for yourself if it is appropriate to take part.

You are excluded from taking part if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19. If you take part and are infected with COVID-19 during the project, you are allowed to continue. However, please consider carefully if it is appropriate to complete the tasks during this period and ensure you're recovered before restarting them.

The COVID-19 is also a worrying time in general. Consider that too, as when you take part, it might cause additional worries. You might have other priorities, and if so, don't take part.

If you are interested, please contact us via waru@aber.ac.uk and we will do the official screening process, which will involve various questions around your current health. You will also be provided with a risk assessment, so you are made fully aware of the risks and how you should mitigate them. This process allows us to determine if it is appropriate for you to take part.

When the project runs

The start of the project is May 2020, but you can start to take part at any point thereafter. There is no current end date, as we would like to monitor you until the impact of COVID-19 on your daily activities is over. Presently we don't know when that will be. We also want to monitor the 6 months after you've resumed your usual lifestyle to see what happens then. After all/any restrictions are lifted, a follow up period of 6 months will be conducted, and the project will end. Thus, there is no exact end date; but you can stop anytime you like.



What the project involves

This project is completed by yourself in your own home at your convenience. What we ask you to do is to complete a series of tasks and record how you scored them. The instructions will only be provided after you've contacted us via waru@aber.ac.uk to complete an initial screening for eligibility.

The aim is for you to complete various tasks once a week. Choose a day and time (we recommend 11am) and try to do the tasks on the same day and time each week if possible. We don't mind if you change the day or time, but completing the tasks on the same day and time gives the most consistent results, for example task scores can be different simply because of one being done in the morning and another one in the evening.

You can also do the tasks less frequently, every 2 weeks or even once a month is fine. Please do not complete the tasks if you are unwell. You are in control and should decide yourself if it is safe and appropriate to take part and perform the tasks, on weekly basis.

Which tasks to complete

Firstly, make sure you perform the tasks when someone else is present, and is able to help and take appropriate action if needed. This person needs to be able to support you, record the scores and take action in case of emergency. When in 'lockdown and social isolation', this person is (obviously) a member of the household, as you should always follow government guidelines.



There are some core tasks we ask everyone to do, which takes less than 30 minutes (except the first time, when you are familiarising with the task). The tasks require the following equipment:

1. A chair
2. Something to record time; in seconds (although a stopwatch is better, as it will give decimals too)
3. An object with a weight of around 2-5 kg that you can hold in your hand

If you don't have these, you won't be able to take part.

There are also some paper based questionnaires to complete regarding your level of physical activities, well-being, and health. Then there are some optional tasks you could do, if you want to. The optional tasks combined would take around 1 hour to complete.

The core tasks measure your walking speed, your ability to get up from a chair, your arm strength, and more functional tasks that involves walking and turning. The optional tasks measure your balance, your stair walking performance, level of physical activity, and how you are feeling. Instructions on how to the tasks are provided later, after you've formally agreed to take part.

You record all results on the 'results sheet' and return them to us when you've completed your day of assessments.

Before doing the tasks

Health and safety are most important and take time to consider if it is wise to do the tasks. Create a safe environment, and ensure someone else is present, who can also record the scores on your behalf.

We recommend performing the tasks around 11am a few hours after eating breakfast and had something to drink, but not straight after eating or on an empty stomach. Try to have been active (moving around) before this time too, so your muscles have warmed up.

If you are unwell, do not do the tasks. Skip them, and record on the results sheets that you wanted to do them but did not because of a particular reason.

Recording your results

There is a results sheet you can complete. On there, you can provide your own code of at least 5 characters, followed by two digits that are your day of your date of birth (i.e. between 01-31), so that the data is unidentifiable and can not be traced back to you. With a code of 7 characters, we hope that it will also be unique to you, but we will check when we receive your informed consent and let you know if you need to change it. An Example would look like this DJLzz24.

You should use that code for all results sheets, as that will allow us to evaluate them over time.

Returning your results should be done on the same day of completing the tasks and can be done via email, or an online form. Further details will be provided when you commence the study.

The risks of taking part

This is the bit to really consider. The tasks are based on activities and challenges of daily living but are often standardized and performed in the presence of trained staff who supervise. Now you are self-assessing, it could increase some associated risks that 'things going wrong' and thus the potential need for medical assistance. You could fall, you could injure a muscle, break a bone, or at worst have a

cardiac event. Currently, hospitals are places where you could be exposed COVID-19. Just like normal life the risks are there, but a little higher because you are challenging yourself and with increased COVID-19 risk in hospitals.

Therefore, we advise you to consider safety first. You can adapt the tasks to make them safer but only if you are consistent in what you measure from week to week. That will enable us to monitor any 'changes' (and that is what we are most interested in).

The leg strength task can be quite intense. The tasks might not be suitable for you, because of your current level of ability, or chronic conditions. You can adapt this by sitting on a slightly higher chair to perform the task.

Potential side-effects

The project is observational in nature, meaning you are encouraged to live your normal life (including any exercise you do). The only addition is the completion of the tasks described above.

Despite the risks during the tasks, there are no long-term side effects to participating in this project that are greater than usual daily living activities. Injuries could occur, but that can happen anytime.

We would like to know if there are any adverse effects from doing the tasks in your home. Therefore, we will ask you to record any of them, if they occur. That would allow us to change our instructions, or stop the project, if needed. If you feel overwhelming fatigue immediately after the tasks; have a rest and sit down for at least 5 minutes before moving around.

Psychologically, there could be negative effects of knowing your scores over a period of time. We are doing this project to determine

if the change in lifestyle due to COVID-19 affects you. It may provide us with information that could affect you negatively. That might become obvious when you monitor yourself and create more worries (alongside other worries and concerns around COVID-19).

Finally, there are the unforeseen side effects; let us know if any occur.

The possible benefits of taking part

The results of this project are being used to monitor the impact on older people's physical health and well-being. As you get older, your strength, your balance and walking speed all decrease. That is normal, but partly also because you might become less physically active. With COVID-19 restricting your daily patterns and physical activities, this might have an additional impact. We want to establish if any decline during COVID-19 is faster than the typical ageing process. For that, we need to monitor many older adults during this period.

We will monitor you following the COVID-19 restrictions, as we might see an increase in the scores as people return to their more usual lifestyle. If you know your own scores, you can then see if this is also the case for you. However, we will not provide you with feedback of your scores.

The combined results of all participants will help determine if there is a need for a targeted approach 'after COVID-19 restrictions'.

Depending on the outcome, we could consider developing a follow up intervention that tries to 'undo' any negative changes. If that occurs, and if we have your contact details, we can invite to you to take part.



When the project stops

All data collected is already unidentifiable and will be analysed and written up to be published and presented and distributed, with the intention to reach both scientific and non-scientific communities. It is expected that all data will be made publicly available, in line with the recommendation of the '[Open Science Framework](#)'. There is no way the data can be linked to you. If we have your contact details, we can provide the non-scientific version to you.

Do this is if something goes wrong

If you have reason to complain about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of the project, you can report this to the project leader, contact details are below, or via email to the ethical committee that approved the project: ethics@aber.ac.uk.

Data confidentiality

All information collected about you during the course of the project will be kept strictly confidential. All information is coded so that you cannot be recognised from it. All data will be saved on a password protected computer to ensure security throughout. All data will be stored and collected in accordance with GDPR rules and regulations.

Ethical project approval

The project has been reviewed by Aberystwyth University ethics committee (Application ID: 15703) and was approved on 20-5-2020.





The organizers

The leaders of the project are researchers from the Well-being and health Research Assessment Unit (WARU) at Aberystwyth University, in Wales, the United Kingdom.

You can contact the organizers for any further queries, complaints, suggestions or any other feedback.

The main contact person's details are:

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