

This Simple Strength Test Could Reveal Your Risk of Alzheimer's and Heart Disease

The findings are based on an analysis of data from more than 51,000 people aged 50 and over in 15 countries.

According to a study conducted by scientists at the University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), older people who have difficulty lifting a 5kg object are at high risk of a series of chronic diseases and musculoskeletal disorders, seriously reducing their quality of life.

The findings are based on an analysis of data from more than 51,000 people aged 50 and over in 15 countries. 'We followed them over time to see if the ability to lift 5kg was associated with future health problems. The results were striking,' said Professor Rizwan Qaisar, lead author of the study.

People who have difficulty lifting a 5kg object have a significantly higher risk of:

1. Low quality of life
2. Depression
3. Chronic lung disease
4. Hip osteoarthritis
5. Joint disorders
6. High cholesterol
7. Alzheimer
8. Stroke
9. Osteoarthritis

Interestingly, this link was independent of age or gender. The scientists' findings suggest that this simple test could be an important early indicator of overall health and future disease risks.



Simple muscle strength screening tool

The researchers explain that their goal was to create a simpler, more accessible method of assessing muscle strength—one that anyone could do at home. Currently, methods of measuring muscle weakness often rely on expensive equipment that is only available in a clinic.

Having trouble lifting 5kg is often due to muscle weakness—a common condition that comes with aging. Professor Qaisar stresses that muscle weakness is not just a minor inconvenience, but a serious health warning sign.

'Clinical measuring devices are accurate but expensive, difficult to access, and require regular maintenance. Therefore, we recommend the 5kg lift test. Think of a bag of rice, a pet, or household items—they typically weigh around 5kg. If someone has difficulty lifting them, it could be an early sign of muscle weakness.'

Global health risk

Although there are no exact statistics on the number of people with muscle weakness, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 1.71 billion people have musculoskeletal diseases that limit their mobility. In the United States, about 5% of people aged 60 and older have muscle weakness.

The team describes muscle weakness as a 'risk factor for many diseases,' pointing out that most current assessment methods require a clinic visit. 'We analyzed the association between the ability to lift 5 kg and musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, metabolic, and neurological diseases in people aged 50 and older in 15 countries (n = 51,536) over a period of 5 years. The results showed that difficulty lifting 5 kg can predict many diseases and reduce quality of life. We propose this as a simple index for self-assessment of muscle weakness at home.'

Applications in personal and community health care

The study has important public health implications because it provides an accessible way to measure muscle weakness. "Lifting 5 kg: a simple action, a strong predictor of health. No expensive equipment required. Our findings help people self-assess their health early," said co-author Dr. Fabio Franzese from the SHARE Institute in Berlin, Germany. "Muscle weakness is not just a sign of aging—it is an important warning sign of future disease."

Data were taken from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) 2013–2020. The results show:

1. 19.5% of participants (10,025 people) had difficulty lifting 5 kg in 2013.
2. After 4 years, this group had a higher risk of:
 1. Low quality of life (+9.42%)
 2. Depression (+8.14%)
 3. Arm muscle weakness (+7.38%)
 4. Osteoarthritis (+6.98%)
3. The risk of rheumatoid arthritis, heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, Alzheimer's, stroke or hip fracture is also slightly to moderately increased.

Notably, after adjusting for age and country, the risk was higher in men than in women.

' If older adults have difficulty lifting a 5-kilogram object, they are at increased risk for a number of health problems later in life, ' explains Dr. Qaisar. ' Including depression, poor quality of life, chronic lung disease, hip fractures, arthritis, high cholesterol, stroke, and even Alzheimer's .'

This method is considered extremely simple, cost-free, and can be done right at home. "All you need is a familiar object that weighs about 5kg—like a grocery bag or a rice cooker. If you find it difficult to lift, don't ignore it! It could be an important clue to your health."

Try it now—if you or a loved one has difficulty lifting 5kg, consult your doctor for advice and a comprehensive health check-up!

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