

# Stages of Frailty

Frailty is a life stage.

It begins when the health issues a person experiences over their lifetime start to have an effect on their overall health or their independence with doing everyday activities. Frailty may be observed as changes with memory/thinking, difficulties getting around, or increased medical problems.

Frailty isn't all or nothing, but comes in levels or stages.

While some people experience a slow and gradual progression of frailty, progression can happen suddenly if a new serious illness comes along (e.g. broken hip, stroke, heart attack, severe infection, etc.).

Frailty looks different at each level. Some of the factors affecting a person's level of frailty may be helped by treatments and supports from a health care provider and/or team. Research and clinical care focuses on improving each person's experience of frailty, slowing its progression, or addressing specific things that add to a person's frailty.

While there is no cure for frailty, some interventions can improve a person's experience and may even improve or reverse problems in mild frailty. Interventions may include stopping inappropriate medications or treatments, offering opportunities for exercise and strengthening to improve mobility, and good nutrition.

Social isolation and accessing social supports can also become a bigger challenge as frailty progresses. Social supports include being able to get out to activities, access nutritious food and adequate shelter, and having caregiver support. Most people who are frail need to depend on at least one other person for support in order to function in a community setting. The health and wellbeing of the support person is also important, so that they can continue to be there to help the person living with frailty.

**Below are the frailty levels and some ways frailty might appear:**

When at a certain level of frailty, a person or others around them may notice that day-to-day life involves <b>ONE or MORE</b> of the following:	
Vulnerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Starting to slow down and/or feel more tired during the day <input type="checkbox"/> Some mild memory trouble from time to time <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with memory and thinking during an illness
Mild	<input type="checkbox"/> Using (or needing to use) a walker or cane <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with activities such as keeping finances or pills straight, organizing or doing grocery shopping, keeping your home in order, making complete meals, or driving <input type="checkbox"/> Mild stage dementia (e.g. problems remembering recent events)
Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Needing help to use stairs <input type="checkbox"/> New problems choosing clean clothes or clothes appropriate to the occasion <input type="checkbox"/> Problems remembering to bathe and/or trouble getting into the bathtub alone <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate stage dementia (e.g. problems remembering the names of grandchildren/close friends)
Severe	<input type="checkbox"/> Needing the help of another person to walk or use a wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Needing help to bathe, dress or use the bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Severe stage dementia (e.g. problems remembering the names of your partner or children)
Very severe	<input type="checkbox"/> Needing help with all aspects of life <input type="checkbox"/> Very severe dementia (e.g. problems with speaking) <input type="checkbox"/> Not able to get out of bed

**Questions? Contact the Frailty Strategy at: [frailtystrategy@nshealth.ca](mailto:frailtystrategy@nshealth.ca)**