

Does cognitive behavioural therapy reduce the fear of falling in older people living in the community?

Clinical Question	How effective and safe is Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for reducing fear of falling (FoF) in older people living in the community?
Bottom Line	This review suggests that CBT with and without exercise interventions probably reduces FoF following the end of treatment and over six months, compared to control. The benefits up to six months may be sustained following cessation of the intervention.
Caveat	The effect sizes shown were small and potentially are not clinically relevant. This may be as a result of the underlying cause of the fear. If the concerns reflect a realistic and appropriate appraisal of one's risk of falling. These people could well be treated using structured exercise and balance training programmes. However, if the concerns are indicative of maladaptive processes, it becomes essential to suggest psychological interventions such as CBT along with exercise to overcome the fear.
Context	FoF is a lasting concern about falling that leads to an individual avoiding activities that he/she remains capable of performing. It is a common condition amongst older adults and may occur independently of previous falls. CBT, a talking therapy that helps change dysfunctional thoughts and behaviour, with and without exercise, may reduce FoF, for example, by reducing catastrophic thoughts related to falls, and modifying dysfunctional behaviour.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Lenouvel E, Ullrich P, Siemens W, Dallmeier D, Denking M, Kienle G, Zijlstra GA, Hauer K, Klöppel S. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) with and without exercise to reduce fear of falling in older people living in the community. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2023, Issue 11. Art. No.: CD014666. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD014666.pub2. This review contains 12 trials with a total of 3,197 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD014666.pub2/full>