

## Testing Functional Mobility

by [Graham Ginsberg](#)

The key to maintaining functional mobility is the retention of muscle strength and flexibility. In order for people to live independently, so they can perform everyday activities and tasks, it is imperative that they maintain their muscular strength.

The components of functional mobility are: muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, upper and lower body flexibility, agility, dynamic balance and body composition. Functional mobility enables people to perform basic activities of daily living.

Activities are broken up into three groups: Activities of Daily Living (ADL) include the ability to bathe and dress oneself; Instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) include housework and shopping; Advanced activities of daily living (AADL) include strenuous housework, sports and exercise activities.

In previous columns we have discussed several tests that we can give to determine a person's functional mobility. To date we've told you about the following tests: chair stand, arm curl, two-minute step and the chair sit and reach test. This week we will discuss the six-minute walk, back scratch and eight foot up and go tests.

The six-minute walk test assesses aerobic endurance. This is defined as the capacity to perform large muscle activity over an extended period of time. Aerobic endurance is important for stair climbing, walking, shopping, sightseeing and involvement in sports. The test includes continuously walking around a fifty yard course to cover the furthest distance possible in six minutes. Using a timed test instead of a designated distance, we are able to improve the scoring effectiveness since scores can be obtained for all ability levels. A frail person may only be able to walk a few feet in six minutes, while someone who has a high level of fitness may be able to cover a few hundred yards in the same time.

The normal range of scores for women in the 70 to 74 age group was 480 to 615 yards. The normal range for men in the same age group was 545 to 680 yards.

The next test is the back scratch test. The purpose of this test is to assess upper body flexibility, especially in the shoulder area. Shoulder flexibility is important in performing common tasks such as combing one's hair, zipping a dress, putting on an overhead garment or reaching for a seat belt. Pain, injury and disability can all be a result of reduced range of motion in the shoulder. The test is simple and involves reaching one hand over the shoulder and down the back as far as possible, trying to bring the fingers of both hands together. The score is the number of inches, either plus or minus, between the extended middle fingers.

The normal range of scores for women in the 70 to 74 age group go from a negative (minus) four inches to a positive (plus) one inch. The same age group for men ranged from a negative (minus) eight inches to a negative (minus) one inch.

The final test, the eight-foot up-and-go test, assesses agility and dynamic balance. These are attributes that are needed for a number of functions, like answering the doorbell or phone in a timely fashion. The test involves getting up from a seated position and walking as quickly as

possible around a marker that is eight feet away and returning to the seated position.

Women in the 70 to 74 age group scored 7.1 to 4.9 seconds in the normal range and men in the same group scored 6.2 to 4.4 seconds.

The test results are then assessed by a qualified tester, and recommendations will be made as to the needed exercises in order to increase performance. The goal is to increase, then maintain, functional mobility thus allowing the individual to remain independent.

[Naples Florida Retirees](#) rely on functional ability to stay healthy.

Tags: functional mobility, functional mobility test

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