

B | HOME

Exercise just the tonic to perk up seniors

Strength training programme to be open to more people aged 55 and above

Raffaella Nathan Charles

Slipping on water and hurting her hips left 97-year-old Lau Soon Siang physically very weak and in pain last year.

After 12 weeks of strength training, however, the housewife has regained her muscle strength and balance. She can now resume her daily walks and go to the coffee shop to chat with friends.

More people can benefit from Gym Tonic – the strength training for seniors aged 55 and above that helped Madam Lau – when the programme is extended to the public at eight locations by next year, the Lien Foundation announced yesterday. The programme has been available only to residents in nursing homes and eldercare centres.

The public can go to ActiveSG Gym@Our Tampines Hub, Care Corner Senior Activity Centre (62B Toa Payoh), Methodist Welfare Services Senior Activity Centre (Fernvale) and St Hilda's Community Services, which will open this year, and Touch Community Wellness Hub and Bishan Community Club next year. Two other locations that already have Gym Tonic will also open to the public – Man Fut Tong-Hoe Yuen Hoe Senior Care Centre



Madam Lau Soon Siang, 97, went through 12 weeks of strength training under the Gym Tonic programme earlier this year, which helped her regain her muscle strength and balance. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

next year and Peacehaven Community Hub this year.

Lien Foundation will also select 300 seniors aged 65 and above for free Gym Tonic trials.

Joining fees vary, ranging from less than \$10 to \$50 a month. Fees for assessment of physical condi-

tions range from \$30 to \$80.

The programme consists of 12 weeks of strength training using air-powered equipment from Finland. There are nutrition talks and health assessments. The seniors can tap a card on the exercise equipment, which will adjust automati-

cally to accommodate their individual fitness levels. This data is stored in a digital cloud for them to keep track. The 30-minute, twice-a-week sessions aim to increase seniors' muscle mass and make them

[FRAILTY INDEX continued on B2](#)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Vr2FnTBsZI>

Exercise as medicine

Gym Tonic is an evidence-based, senior-friendly strength-training programme that improves the functional abilities of the elderly with advanced equipment and software.

PNEUMATIC MACHINES

It uses six air-powered exercise machines from Finland. These focus on strengthening the seniors' core muscle groups, namely their leg, abdomen, chest, abduction, shoulder and upper body muscles.

Being pneumatic, the equipment is gentler on the joints, and more suited for the elderly who are weaker.

GRADUAL WEIGHTS

There are also smaller resistance weights, from zero resistance to 100g, 200g and so on, whereas commercial gyms usually have weights in kilograms.

The air-powered resistance can thus be tailored to the seniors' needs more gradually.

SOFTWARE-BASED SYSTEM

The gym also collects large troves of data, allowing seniors to motivate themselves by checking on their progress, down to the number of repetitions of exercises they have done. Their progress data is all stored on a digital cloud. The seniors simply use one radio frequency identification card, which they tap on the equipment. The machine then tailors itself to the user's preference, adjusting the power according to their progress and saved data from previous workouts.

The Gym Tonic programme will be offered as a free trial to 300 seniors aged 65 and above. Those interested can sign up at www.gymtonic.sg/signup/