



## **The EMBOLDEN study: Partnering with Older Adults and Communities to Develop and Test a Community-Based Program to Enhance Physical and Community Mobility in Older Adults**

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The EMBOLDEN research program aims to make important contributions to improve physical mobility of older adults, improve social participation, and facilitate connections to community programs in neighbourhoods with significant health inequities through a co-designed community-based program. The program was found to be feasible and acceptable to older adults and providers. The research team is currently evaluating implementation, effectiveness, and scalability of the program.

### **Why is this study needed?**

- Physical mobility and social participation can help maintain independence and quality of life for adults 55 years of age and older.
- Community programs designed to support these activities may be highly effective, but they may not be available or easily accessed.
- Some older adults also face difficulties with getting around in their home and/or neighbourhood. These challenges make it difficult for them to participate in community programs. We want to learn about how to best help older adults overcome some of their challenges.
- Studies show that the most effective and enjoyable community programs are designed collaboratively with input from the target population.

### **What priority neighbourhoods are being targeted?**

- Downtown Hamilton (Dundurn, Strathcona, Durand, Corktown, Stinson)
- Central Hamilton Mountain (Burkholme, Macassa)
- East Hamilton/Stoney Creek (Riverdale West, Corman, Kentley)
- Downtown-East Toronto

Priority neighbourhoods were selected based on population health indicators including: high proportion of adults aged 55 and older, high prevalence of older adults living below the low-income cut-off, material deprivation scores, and high proportion of immigrant populations.

### **EMBOLDEN Goals**

1. To partner with older adults and service providers to co-design and test a community program to promote mobility.
2. To build on assets and address community needs, service gaps, and barriers older adults face.
3. To promote physical and community mobility of older adults who may experience difficulties participating in community programs and live in areas with limited resources to promote optimal health.

## How is the study being conducted?



Building on existing best practices and local evidence, researchers together with [local older adults and community service providers](#) have co-designed an innovative community-based program to promote mobility amongst community-dwelling older adults.

Key program components include:



PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY



HEALTHY EATING



BUILDING SOCIAL  
CONNECTIONS



SYSTEM  
NAVIGATION

These components are jointly delivered by primary care, public health, and recreation providers. It also involves capacity building with [community-based partner organizations](#).

The environmental scan and evidence reviews support a contextually relevant and evidence-informed co-designed intervention. Engaging community stakeholders in intervention co-design supported development of feasible and acceptable program to address community needs, promote mobility amongst community-dwelling older adults, address existing service gaps, foster uptake, and address health inequities. The co-design process fostered increased understanding of optimal design features and implementation of a community-based program to support mobility.

The program was designed to allow for tailoring to individuals' needs and adaptations to align with different contexts (e.g., variability in local assets and gaps).

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