



# Dignity of Risk

## What is Dignity of Risk?

Dignity of risk is the right to live life in a way you choose, even with risk. It recognizes that daily life is uncertain and that taking some risks **can lead to positive outcomes** in your quality of life, health and well-being.

## Why is Dignity of Risk important to older adults?

Most older adults want to keep their independence and make their own choices instead of being “kept safe”. Even if they are living with frailty (an age-related condition that makes it harder to recover from illness) or dementia, older adults should be supported to **live on their own terms** as much as possible.

## Barriers to Dignity of Risk



### Our own worries

can make us want to do things for older adults to help them avoid risks. But there are benefits from taking certain risks in daily life. After all, it is their life.



### Ageism

is a false belief that older adults cannot or should not do something because they are too old or cannot make their own choices. It can also lead to discrimination against older adults, “*just because they are old*”.



### Being overprotective

or treating older adults like they are fragile can hurt more than help them. When we try too hard to protect older adults from all possible risks, we can end up taking away small freedoms and choices that mean a lot to them.



### Focusing too much on safety

can lead to taking away older adults’ meaningful activities. This can harm their quality of life and independence. For example, preventing a person from walking or moving around because you worry they may fall.

## How can we support older adults?

- Support them to take reasonable risks.
- Respect their choices and values, even if they are living with frailty, dementia or other conditions.
- Try our best to understand what they want.
- Identify and lower risks where possible.
- Keep their dignity for as long as possible.

**Note:** We do need to recognize that if another person’s safety is a concern, we may have to be more cautious, but we can try to identify and lower the risks while still supporting the older adult’s dignity of risk as much as possible.

For more information visit: [www.nshealth.ca/frailty/dignity-risk](http://www.nshealth.ca/frailty/dignity-risk)