



## AGING AND SARCOPENIA: SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?

By Tricia Talerico, D.C., M.S., Nutr.

**What is Sarcopenia anyway?** Sarcopenia is also known as age-related muscle loss. An estimated 25% of 60-year-olds have sarcopenia and almost 2/3 of those 80 years and older have lost serious amounts of muscle mass, threatening a healthy lifespan and contributing to decreasing independence and quality of life. Most people think that our skeletal muscles only generate force and movement. Surprisingly, they also play a major role in our metabolism, circulation and cognition.

Skeletal muscle is the most abundant tissue in our bodies, making up approximately 40-55% of our body mass. It is also the primary site of insulin-mediated glucose disposal, glucose uptake and the main energy consumer of fat. Advancing age and sarcopenia is the primary cause of insulin resistance in older adults. This is because skeletal muscle is the major tissue where insulin causes glucose to be absorbed. Statistics show that elderly persons with low muscle mass experience delayed recovery after traumas, have a higher rate of complications and infections following surgery, suffer more drug toxicity reactions and higher disease-specific mortality. Since skeletal muscle acts as an endocrine organ with immune regulatory properties, sarcopenia can contribute to immunosenescence, or the gradual deterioration of the immune system, which is a leading cause of death in the elderly.

So, what can we do to prevent this progressive decline in muscle mass that sets us up for frailty and metabolic imbalance? In order to gain or maintain muscle mass, one needs to eat or drink an appropriate amount of protein. Minimally, we would need about 1.2 grams (gms) of protein per kilogram (kg) of body weight per day. Elderly persons or athletes may require 1.6-2.0 gms/kg of weight. So, a person with a weight of 150 lbs. can be converted to 67.5 kg. Depending on their age and activity, they may require 81-135 gms of protein per day. Protein intake can be in the form of lean organic or grass-fed animal protein, a protein shake (whey or plant-based) or plant-based protein (beans, tempeh, soy, tofu). In my

office we use a plant-based medical shake (Metagenics Advanced Protein) that supports the nutritional management of sarcopenia by supplying essential amino acids, including leucine, to support the healthy aging of skeletal muscle. For more information and/or ordering go to [DrTrish.metagenics.com](http://DrTrish.metagenics.com) for a one-time discount.

Exercise would be the other obvious way to maintain or gain muscle mass. Despite the well-known benefits of resistance training, less than 10% of those under the age of 75 in the U.S. participate in any muscle strengthening activities. It's quite possible that this low rate of participa-

tion is due to the fact that over half of those who do exercise end up getting injured. Conventional resistance training uses resistance at 70-85% of your one rep max. For many elderly persons, this type of training usually results in injuries. In contrast, low-intensity resistance training uses weights that are just 20-35% of your one-rep max. With this type of training, the risk of injury is largely eliminated. In many frail, elderly persons, even weights of just 1-2 lbs or just body weight are all that is needed to achieve benefit.

So, aging is inevitable for all of us but the way in which we age is definitely something we can influence.

### IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH... IMPROVE YOUR LIFE!



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