

UNDERSTANDING SARCOPENIA

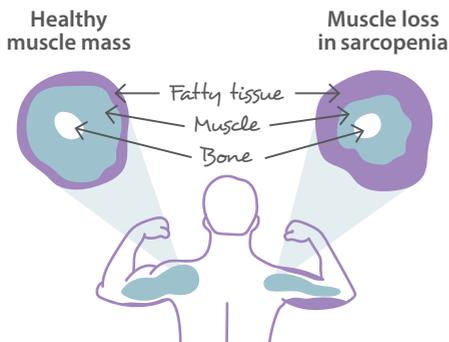
a patient guide

As we age, our bodies progress through several developmental stages which change the way we feel physically. One of the most important concerns is muscle strength. Muscle mass and strength reaches its peak when people approach their 40s. Later in life it is only natural to feel that our body does not have the same amount of strength or energy as it once had. We gradually lose muscle mass year after year and only notice when it impacts daily activities.

For some people, the process of muscle loss and strength is much more severe. It is important to work closely with health care practitioners if you are finding it difficult to complete day-to-day activities.

WHAT IS SARCOPENIA?

Sarcopenia is a degenerative reduction of skeletal muscle mass, strength, and function. The number of muscle fibres reduce, along with their size. In many ways, sarcopenia has been likened to osteoporosis. The condition can affect quality of life and lifespan.



PATIENTS WITH SARCOPENIA EXPERIENCE:



REDUCED MUSCLE SIZE



LOSS OF STRENGTH



WEAKNESS



POOR BALANCE AND EVENTUALLY...



**DIFFICULTY TAKING PART IN DAILY ACTIVITIES
E.G. NAVIGATING STAIRS**

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Sarcopenia is a common condition in adults over the age of 50, affecting approximately 10% of the population. By the time we reach our 80s most people will have lost 35-40% of their muscle mass and 20-40% of their strength. The condition affects those with other chronic diseases, those who undergo surgery or who have injuries requiring extended bed rest or that affect mobility. Although the condition primarily affects the elderly, younger people are also at risk of developing sarcopenia.



DID YOU KNOW?

The phrase sarcopenia comes from *sarx*, the Greek word for flesh, and *penia* which indicates deficiency.

WHAT CAUSES SARCOPENIA?

Although ageing is the most common cause of sarcopenia, there are other factors that can play a role in this process of muscle loss.

SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

Physical inactivity, either as a result of living a sedentary lifestyle by choice or a health condition causing disability, is a powerful driver in the development of sarcopenia. Patients who have been bed ridden for a period due to injury, surgery or illness have an accelerated loss of muscle and strength. Even bed rest due to a cold or flu leads to muscle loss, after just a few days.

POOR DIET/ MALNUTRITION

Sarcopenia can result from malnutrition, whether it be from an inability to eat, high nutrient requirements, malabsorption conditions or limited access to healthy foods, especially proteins.

INFLAMMATORY CONDITIONS

Systemic inflammatory conditions such as autoimmune conditions, diabetes, inflammatory bowel diseases and rheumatoid arthritis can lead to the development of secondary sarcopenia. Osteosarcopenic obesity is a cluster of conditions in which obesity exists along with low bone and muscle mass, leading to poor quality of life and survival.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Consult your healthcare practitioner if you feel you may be experiencing sarcopenia or are at risk, and they will develop a dietary, supplementation and exercise program that is right for you.