

Stronger than Sarcopenia



Sarcopenia, Muscle Health, and COVID-19

Sarcopenia (saar-ko-pee-ni-uh) is the loss of muscle and strength that can happen when someone gets older and does less physical activity. This may cause trouble with daily activities like standing from a chair, walking, twisting the lid off a jar, or carrying groceries.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people implemented social distancing measures. Exercise and other physical activities at the gym or other public facilities were restricted to minimize the spread of infections. The effects of quarantines and social distancing have had a significant impact on the physical fitness, muscle strength, and overall wellness of older adults. All these factors have increased the rate of sarcopenia and frailty. Studies have shown that social distancing and quarantine during COVID-19 resulted in:

- Negative effects on mental health, social well-being, and physical activity in older adults.
- Older adults engaged in 40% less physical activity during the pandemic, which resulted in increases in fat and decreases in muscle.
- Loss of gains from physical fitness leading to decreased immunity.
- Increased vulnerability to COVID-19 and other infections for people with weakened immune systems and underlying diseases.

You don't have to go to a gym to strengthen your muscles. You can lift weights at home, work with resistance bands, use your body weight for resistance (for example, push-ups and sit-ups), and dig or shovel in the garden. Even lifting canned goods can be considered an activity that strengthens your muscles.

Tips for Starting a New Exercise Routine

It can be hard to start a new exercise routine. Here are a few tips that can help!

- Try a manageable routine that you think you can do regularly, starting with 1–2 days per week.
- Check out resources from the [CDC](#), [Move Your Way](#), [AARP](#), and the [National Council on Aging](#) to find an exercise program that works best for you.



Staying active is important at all ages and helps decrease your risk of getting sarcopenia.

It is never too late to rebuild your strength.

You can begin or restart physical activity at any time to help increase your muscle strength.

- Be sure to discuss exercise with your health care professional to find the best options to meet your abilities.

Connect with Us!

To learn more, please visit [womenshealth.gov/sarcopenia](https://www.womenshealth.gov/sarcopenia).

