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Muscle health for seniors

LONG term amino acid supplementation, says Ajinomoto, could be a useful tool in the prevention and treatment of muscle wasting, known as sarcopenia. The company reports recent research* confirms that boosting intakes of amino acids, the building blocks of protein popularly used in sports nutrition, can help people avoid the problem of sarcopenia as they get older.

Sarcopenia is the age-related, degenerative loss of skeletal muscle mass, strength and function. If no action is take to reduce sar-

copenia, people experience about a 10% decline in muscle mass between the ages of 2 and 50 and a further 45% shrinkage by their eighth decade. For example, the bicep muscle of a newborn baby has around 500,000 fibres while that of an 80 year old will have just 300,000 fibres.

While loss of bone density renders the skeleton more prone to fractures, it is mainly the gradual erosion of lean muscle, and the ensuing frailty, which leads to falls. Sarcopenia cannot be halted completely, but Ajinomoto says maintenance of muscle protein can be stimulated by increased amino acid availability.

**Sheffield-Moore M et al. Amino Acid Supplementation and Skeletal Muscle Metabolism in Ageing Populations.*