

# The Empire Runner

Out to  
Lunch

## The Doctor is

Only You Can Prevent...*SARCOOPENIA*

Go ahead, say it out loud: *sar-co-pee-nee-uh*. The word may make you blush a bit, but it's merely the fancy medical term we use which means a loss of muscle tissue. Once you learn about age-related sarcopenia I think you'll agree that it's something you really do want to prevent, or at least minimize.

In our affluent, sedentary society, as we age through the decades a steady degradation is generally noted in the body: we tend to get progressively fatter, even though we may actually eat fewer calories than we used to. We get weaker and routine physical tasks become more challenging and ultimately impossible. We stumble and fall more often, get injured more frequently and don't recover readily. We run out of steam earlier in the day. We eventually become truly frail, fragile and fearful of activity. This is not a pretty picture, but it is indeed a valid generalization of the aging journey for too many of us.

A variety of factors contribute to this downward spiral of vitality, durability and function, but sarcopenia is always a major culprit. Traditionally, we have considered age-related sarcopenia to be purely biologically hard-wired and irreversible; after all, even aging horses and gorillas develop sarcopenia. But in modern humans, sarcopenia develops prematurely and is profoundly accelerated by our sedentary lifestyles. Therefore, *we can, and should*, do something about it. Aerobic fitness alone is inadequate. Health and functional independence require reliable, strong and powerful muscles, right on into our 90's and beyond.

So what's the antidote for sarcopenia? Strength training, plain and simple. Studies suggest we should engage in some form of strength-enhancing activity at least twice a week; three times per week is much better. Strength training needn't be very time-consuming, nor complicated. 40 minutes of devoted strength training, three times per week, can make you *very* strong and you'll never regret it. And don't fret about getting bulky and looking like a fire hydrant – it simply won't happen, particularly if you maintain a high level of aerobic fitness. Strength training has an easy, short learning curve, but do make the effort to learn how to do it right. Hire a smart trainer for a few sessions and you should be good to go. You'll learn that we now emphasize full-body strengthening with free weights and body weight workouts. The benefits of seated, artificial, machine-based training absolutely pale when compared to the profound, functional benefits of multi-dimensional, compound training performed with body weight and free weight exercises.

Sarcopenia. The word even sounds like a bad thing and it truly is. And only *you* can prevent sarcopenia. I'll meet you at the pull-up bar and we'll get right to it.

*Alec Isabeau, D.C.*