

Sarcopenia, which affects up to 20 percent of European seniors, may increase 63 percent by 2045

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Today, at the World Congress on Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases. researchers from the University of Liège, Belgium presented a study that reveals the enormous and growing burden of sarcopenia in Europe.

Sarcopenia is a disease associated with the [ageing process](#). Hallmark signs of the disorder are loss of muscle mass and strength, which in turn affects balance, gait and overall ability to perform tasks of daily living.

Due to its complexity, there is as yet no global consensus on the definition of the disease for diagnostic purposes. The European Working Group on Sarcopenia in Older People (EWGSOP) has defined sarcopenia as low [muscle mass](#) with low muscle strength OR with low gait speed. With two cutoff points available for each of the three components of this definition, eight different methods of diagnosis of sarcopenia can be used.

Using the Eurostat online database, the researchers retrieved age and gender-specific population projections from 2016-2045 for 28 European countries. The age and gender-specific prevalence of sarcopenia was assessed from a study that precisely compared prevalence estimates according to the different diagnostic cutoffs of the [EWGSOP proposed definition](#).

The prevalence estimates were interpolated for adults above 65 years of age. The estimates of sarcopenia prevalence were then applied to population projections until 2045. The results showed that:

- Using the definition providing the lowest prevalence estimates, the number of individuals with sarcopenia in Europe in 2016 is 10,869,527. This will rise to 18,735,173 in 2045 (a 72.4% increase). The overall prevalence of sarcopenia in the elderly will rise from 11.1% in 2016 to 12.9% in 2045. Women currently account for 44.2% of prevalent cases.
- Using the definition providing the highest prevalence estimates, the number of individuals with sarcopenia in Europe is 19,740,527 in 2016, rising to 32,338,990 in 2045 (a 63.8% increase). The overall prevalence of sarcopenia in the elderly will rise from 20.2% in 2016 to 22.3% in 2045. Women currently account for 66.4% of prevalent cases.

Presenting author Dr. Olivier Ethgen stated, "Regardless of which diagnostic cutoff is used to define [sarcopenia](#), the prevalence of this condition is expected to rise substantially in Europe. It is therefore essential that we implement effective prevention and disease management strategies. Health authorities must take action in order to limit the impact on increasingly strained healthcare systems and to help Europeans enjoy healthy, active ageing."

More information: OC24 The Future Prevalence of Sarcopenia in Europe, O. Ethgen, C. Tchokonte, C. Beaudart¹, F. Buckinx, J.-Y. Reginster, O. Bruyère
Abstract book: WCO-IOF-ESCEO World Congress on Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases, 14 -17 April 2016, Malaga, Spain Osteoporosis International, Volume 27/ Suppl 1/ 2016

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