measure iron incorporation. We avoided the problem of equilibration of unlabeled, solid, mineral iron in ferritin with added labeled iron in 3 ways: 1) using no label (5, 2) using soybean plants to which the label was added before seed ferritin formation (9, 11), and 3) using ferritin from which iron was removed before reconstituting the mineral with labeled iron (1). Earlier, we suggested that both the iron status of the subjects and the labeling method may have contributed to the apparent inconsistencies among the various studies (5, 9). Now it appears more likely that the apparent inconsistencies among previous studies depend most heavily on poor equilibration of labeled iron with endogenous, solid, mineral ferritin in vitro or in vivo if the label is added late in bean development, because the women in our recent study had normal iron status (1).

There was no conflict of interest.

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5. Beard JL, Burton JW, Theil EC. Purified ferritin and soybean meal can correct for body size, displayed a notable age-related decline after the age of 60 y, and routine physical activity both at work and during leisure time were shown to positively affect arm and leg muscle masses, independently of age. Importantly, this investigation indicated that relatively nonstructured, low-to-moderate intensity activities—including bicycling, walking, gardening, and housework—can help to maintain muscle mass in elderly men.

It is interesting to note that we came to a similar conclusion (2) in regard to healthy white postmenopausal women of a comparable age range (54–76 y). A curvilinear relation between muscle mass and age was found, with an accelerated decline after 60–65 y. Those women who routinely engaged in work, household, or leisure activity with a combined energy expenditure of >5 MJ per fortnight had markedly better muscle mass indexes than did their less active counterparts; this effect was evident throughout the age range studied. Moreover, as noted by Szulc et al from self-reported data in their male cohort (1), interviews with these women showed the most common leisure-time activities undertaken (walking, dancing, floor exercises, gardening, swimming, and tennis) to be relatively nonstructured and moderate in intensity (2).

Although it must be acknowledged that some training and observational studies have failed to confirm a positive effect of these predominantly aerobic types of activity on muscle mass (3, 4), accumulating evidence supports a role for these popular activities in the maintenance of muscle and the provision of other metabolic benefits, including a reduction of abdominal fat, in both men and women (5). Such activities, therefore, may be useful in preventing sarcopenic obesity, which has been shown to be significantly associated with decreased functional status and increased disability and falls in the elderly (6). The follow-up reports of cohorts such as the MINOS Study subjects should be invaluable in further quantifying these important, practical aspects of the complex relation between physical activity and sarcopenia.

There were no conflicts of interest.

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Erratum


On page 1014, Table 3, the mean daily intakes of olive oil by men and women were incorrect, although there was no error in the corresponding SDs. The correct mean (±SD) intakes (in g) were 53.6 ± 24.0 for men and 46.4 ± 21.8 for women. A programming error was responsible for this overestimation.

The partial regression coefficients of systolic and diastolic blood pressure on SD increments in olive oil intake and the corresponding 95% CIs and P values (reported in Tables 4 and 5 and throughout the text) were unaffected by this error.