

 $\frac{1}{2}$  Review

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# Protein considerations for optimising skeletal muscle mass in healthy young and older adults.

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12 Abstract: Skeletal muscle is critical for human health. Protein feeding, alongside resistance exercise, 13 is a potent stimulus for muscle protein synthesis (MPS) and is a key factor that regulates skeletal 14 muscle mass (SMM). The main purpose of this narrative review was to evaluate the latest evidence 15 for optimising the amino acid or protein source, dose, timing, pattern and macronutrient coingestion 16 for increasing or preserving SMM in healthy young and healthy older adults. We used a systematic 17 search strategy of PubMed and Web of Science to retrieve all articles related to this review objective. 18 In summary, our findings support the notion that protein guidelines for increasing or preserving 19 SMM are more complex than simply recommending a total daily amount of protein. Instead, 20 multifactorial interactions between protein source, dose, timing, pattern and macronutrient 21 coingestion, alongside exercise, influence the stimulation of MPS, and thus should be considered in 22 the context of protein recommendations for regulating SMM. To conclude, on the basis of currently 23 available scientific literature, protein recommendations for optimising SMM should be tailored to 24 the population or context of interest, with consideration given to age and resting/post resistance 25 exercise conditions.

Keywords: Muscle protein synthesis, muscle hypertrophy, amino acid availability, protein source,
 protein dose, protein timing, protein pattern, macronutrient coingestion.

#### 28 1. Introduction

Skeletal muscle is crucial for metabolic health and sport performance. Beyond the positive relationship between skeletal muscle mass (SMM), strength and athletic performance, skeletal muscle also plays an important, and often underappreciated, role in reducing risk of diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, diabetes and osteoporosis [1]. Therefore, strategies to

- 33 maintain or increase SMM are vitally important for both clinical and athletic populations.
- 34 Skeletal muscle tissue displays remarkable plasticity. This plasticity allows for adaptation, including 35 an increase in SMM. Skeletal muscle proteins are continuously being remodelled through the 36 simultaneous processes of muscle protein synthesis (MPS) and muscle protein breakdown (MPB). In 37 turn, skeletal muscle protein remodeling is a prerequisite for increasing SMM [2]. Exercise and 38 nutrition influence SMM through changes in MPS more than MPB [3]. Thus, MPS is accepted to be 39 the dominant process of muscle remodelling responsible for regulating SMM in healthy adult 40 humans. Whilst a high degree of muscle remodelling also is associated with other phenotypic 41 adaptations, including the repair of old and/or damaged muscle proteins and modifications to the 42 type and functionality of muscle proteins, the present review refers to skeletal muscle protein
- 43 remodelling in the context of optimising muscle mass.

44 Protein or amino acid feeding stimulates MPS at rest [4] and during exercise recovery [5]. Thus, it 45 follows that protein ingestion is a key stimulus for preserving SMM under resting conditions and 46 increasing SMM under exercise training conditions. The stimulation of MPS is fundamentally 47 regulated by extracellular and intracellular amino acid availability [6]. Figure 1 depicts the role of 48 amino acid availability in regulating MPS in response to amino acid/protein ingestion and exercise. 49 Amino acid availability is modulated by several dietary factors, including the amino acid/protein 50 source, amount ingested (as a single dose), timing, pattern and macronutrient coingestion. These 51 factors independently and synergistically impact rates of protein digestion and amino acid 52 absorption, splanchnic extraction of amino acid, microvascular perfusion (capillary recruitment and 53 dilation), the delivery of amino acid to skeletal muscle and the uptake of amino acid by skeletal 54 muscle, and thus regulate postprandial rates of MPS. In addition, exercise enhances the ability of 55 skeletal muscle to respond to amino acid provision [7,8]. The most likely contributing mechanism is 56 an exercise-induced increase in blood flow to the muscle [5] that increases the delivery of amino acid 57 to the muscle, thus increasing the provision of substrate for MPS [9]. Crucially, the responsiveness of 58 MPS to amino acid ingestion deteriorates with advancing age [10-12]. This phenomenon is referred 59 to as 'anabolic resistance' and is thought to be mediated by impairments in each of the dietary factors 60 introduced above.

61 To our knowledge, no previous authors have conducted a narrative review, using a systematic search 62 strategy, to evaluate scientific evidence used to inform the latest protein recommendations for 63 optimising MPS and SMM in healthy adult humans. Therefore, the primary objective of this review 64 was to examine the impact of five key factors related to protein nutrition that regulate MPS, defined 65 herein as follows:

- Amino acid/protein *source* refers to the origin source of ingested protein, *e.g.*, isolated intact whey,
  casein or soy; animal or plant. Amino acid/protein *form* refers to the matrix form of ingested
  protein, *e.g.*, liquid or solid.
- 69 ii. Amino acid/protein *dose* refers to the quantity of Amino acid/protein contained in a single70 serving.
- iii. Amino acid/protein *timing* refers to the timed intake of Amino acid/protein in relation to exercise
   (before and after) or to ingestion of other nutrients.
- iv. Amino acid/protein *pattern* refers to the distribution pattern of ingested Amino acid/protein over
   a given period of time, accounting for the dose, timing and frequency of Amino acid/protein
   ingestion.
- v. *Macronutrient co-ingestion* refers to the concurrent ingestion of carbohydrate (CHO) and/or fat
   alongside an Amino acid/protein source.

78 For clarity, this review has been structured to address each factor of protein nutrition independently.

79 However, an important point of discussion concerns the interaction of these factors for modulating

80 MPS in healthy young and older adults. An understanding of recommended protein nutrition

81 practice for optimising MPS and SMM could lead to the provision of improved advice to aid the

82 muscle health of young and older adults.



**Figure 1:** Simplified diagram detailing role of amino acid availability in regulating muscle protein synthesis with protein ingestion and exercise. Whilst resistance exercise preferentially stimulates the synthesis of contractile myofibrillar proteins (*e.g.* actin, myosin, troponin), resistance exercise also stimulates the synthesis of non-contractile proteins (*e.g.* mitochondrial and sarcoplasmic) in skeletal muscle.

#### 84 2. Methods

85 A systematic search strategy was employed to identify citations for this narrative review. We 86 searched the National Library of Medicine database (PubMed) and Web of Science from their 87 inception through to December 2015. The terms "muscle anabolism" OR "muscle protein synthesis" 88 OR "muscle hypertrophy" OR "skeletal muscle protein remodelling" AND "protein feeding" OR 89 "protein ingestion" OR "protein supplementation" OR "AA ingestion" AND "humans" were entered 90 into both databases and filters including "articles" and "humans" were used to refine the search. 91 After initial screening of title and abstracts, selected papers were examined, including the reference 92 lists of the retrieved articles.

93 Studied participants met the eligibility criteria if classified as healthy with no medical 94 contraindications. Participants were young (mean age of studied cohort ≤35 y) and older (mean age 95 of studied cohort  $\geq 65$  y) adult men and women, resistance-trained ( $\geq 2$  exercise sessions/wk) or 96 untrained volunteers, who were studied under resting or post resistance exercise conditions in the 97 fed or fasted state. Several exclusion criteria were applied. We excluded intervention studies where 98 the control condition was not considered appropriate to answer the question. For example, in the 99 context of macronutrient coingestion, several studies included an iso-energetic CHO only [13] or a 100 non-energetic placebo [14] rather than an amino acid/protein- only control condition. Also excluded 101 were case studies and descriptive studies whereby no control group was used. Studies were excluded 102 if they had a specific purpose of weight loss, if the method of protein intake was not oral (e.g., 103 nasogastric/enteral intake of protein or the infusion of amino acids) and the exercise mode was not 104 resistance-based. Finally, we excluded studies where participants were classified as patient groups 105 (*i.e.*, not healthy, including overweight) and any non-human studies. Screening of studies resulted in 106 the assessment of 64 citations for this narrative review. Of these, 24 citations were focused on amino

107 acid /protein source, 8 dose, 11 timing, 6 pattern and 15 macronutrient coingestion.

#### 108 **3.** Synthesis of findings

#### 109 3.1 Amino acid/protein source

110 Amino acid composition and digestive properties can vary between different protein comparisons of

different isolated types of intact proteins, protein blends vs. isolated intact proteins and different forms of the same protein source. The Digestible Indispensable Amino Acid Score (DIAAS) is the

113 latest and preferred index for differentiating between protein sources. The DIAAS score reflects the

114 essential amino acids (EAA) content protein and digestion properties of any given protein source.

#### 115 3.1.1 Isolated types of intact protein

116 The most common comparison of intact proteins is between rapidly digested whey protein that is 117 high in leucine content (~12.5% of total protein) and slowly digested casein protein that exhibits a 118 relatively lower (~8.5% of total protein) leucine content. Studies in young [15] and older [16,17] adults 119 have consistently demonstrated a greater resting postprandial stimulation of mixed-MPS with 120 ingestion of whey compared with casein protein. However, studies that compared the response of 121 MPS or net muscle protein balance (NBAL; difference between MPS and MPB and thus indicative of 122 the aggregate muscle protein anabolic response) to the post-exercise ingestion of whey and casein 123 protein report equivocal results in both young [15,18,19] and older [16,20] adults. In young adults, 124 studies report both a greater post-exercise response of mixed-MPS to ingestion of whey protein 125 compared with micellar casein protein [15] and also no differences in the post-exercise response of 126 NBAL (measured over 5 h) [19] and myofibrillar-MPS (measured over a 6 h period) [18] between 127 whey and casein conditions. Additionally, a recent study in young adults reported no difference in 128 the chronic resistance training-induced increase in lean body mass (LBM) between whey and casein 129 protein conditions [21]. Similarly, studies in older adults have reported both a greater post-exercise

130 stimulation of myofibrillar-MPS (measured over a 4 h period) following ingestion of whey protein

isolate compared to micellar casein [16] and also no difference in the post-exercise response of mixed-

MPS (measured over a 6 h period) [20] between whey and casein protein conditions. No longitudinalendpoint study in older adults has compared intact whey and casein protein sources on any outcome

134 measure of SMM.

135 The discrepant findings between studies that fed whey and casein protein after exercise, at least in 136 terms of acute measurements of MPS and NBAL, may be reconciled by general differences in study 137 design. These differences include the form of intact protein ingested post-exercise (whey hydrolysate, 138 whey isolate, micellar casein or calcium caseinate), the chosen endpoint measurement of muscle 139 anabolism (e.g. mixed-MPS, myofibrillar-MPS or NBAL) and/or the time period over which MPS or 140 NBAL was measured after protein ingestion. Micellar casein is insoluble and therefore is often treated 141 with alkaline compounds such as calcium hydroxide to produce calcium caseinate. This treatment 142 alters the digestion kinetics of casein, such that the rate of blood amino acid appearance with 143 caseinate ingestion more closely mimics whey protein compared with micellar casein protein. 144 Interestingly, acute studies that reported a differential post-exercise response of MPS between whey 145 and casein protein ingestion administered micellar casein [15,16]. Conversely, those studies that 146 reported a similar post-exercise response of MPS or NBAL between whey and casein protein 147 conditions administered calcium caseinate protein [24-26]. Taken together, these data suggest that 148 ingesting the more rapidly absorbed caseinate elicits a greater anabolic stimulus compared with 149 ingesting micellar casein. This insight expands other reviews [22] and the common perception that 150 whey protein, due to amino acid composition (high EAA, BCAA and leucine content) and rapid 151 digestibility properties, is the highest-quality intact protein source popularised in protein 152 supplements. In summary, these data consistently demonstrate that ingestion of whey protein 153 stimulates a greater resting postprandial response of MPS compared to casein protein in young and 154 older adults. Similarly, a direct comparison between "fast" whey protein and "slow" micellar casein 155 protein reveals a superior post-exercise response of MPS to whey protein ingestion in young and 156 older adults.

157 Variation in the time periods over which MPS or NBAL was measured also may explain the 158 discrepant findings. An interesting observation is that studies reporting a greater response of MPS to 159 whey compared with casein protein conducted measurements of MPS over a 4 h period or less after 160 protein ingestion [15,16], whereas studies reporting no differences between whey and casein 161 conditions obtained measurements of MPS or NBAL over 5 h or more [18,19]. It is conceivable that 162 "rapidly" digested whey protein stimulates a greater response of MPS in the early postprandial 163 period (≤4 h), however this advantageous 'muscle protein anabolic response' is cancelled out in the 164 late (>4 h) postprandial period by the more "slowly" digested casein. Whereas this notion is 165 supported by currently available data, more studies are necessary to substantiate this speculation. 166 Moreover, given the disparate digestive properties and subsequent differences in pattern of blood 167 amino acid appearance between whey and micellar casein protein, physiological rationale underpins 168 the notion that casein should be ingested pre-exercise, whereas whey protein should be ingested post-169 exercise. However, despite promising rationale [23] surprisingly no study has directly compared the 170 post-exercise response of MPS to ingestion of casein protein before exercise vs. whey protein after 171 exercise. Future confirmatory work in young and older adults is necessary to strengthen the quality 172 of this evidence.

Three other direct comparisons of isolated types of intact protein have been studied in young adults: whey *vs.* soy protein which is relatively low in leucine (~7.5% of total protein) content, whey *vs.* rice protein which is slowly digested and relatively low in leucine (~8% of total protein) and casein *vs.* soy protein. A similar resting postprandial response of mixed-MPS to ingestion of whey and soy protein has been reported [15]. However, acute metabolic data that demonstrate a greater postexercise response of mixed-MPS with whey compared with soy protein ingestion [15] are consistent with a tightly controlled longitudinal endpoint study of ~20 participants [24] that measured greater

179 with a tightly controlled longitudinal endpoint study of ~20 participants [24] that measured greater

180 gains in (LBM) during a 9-month resistance training period with whey compared to soy protein

181 supplementation. A smaller-scale (n=12 per condition) well-controlled (administration of meal plans)

study that compared whey and rice protein isolate supplementation observed similar gains in LBM between conditions during an 8-wk training period [25]. Finally, greater rested and post-exercise

between conditions during an 8-wk training period [25]. Finally, greater rested and post-exercise responses of MPS were reported with soy compared with casein protein ingestion [15]. In summary,

185 given the sparse body of evidence for each comparison (1 or 2 studies), there remains ample scope

186 for future work that compares the response of MPS and SMM to ingestion of various isolated types

of intact protein, both from animal (*e.g.*, egg, fish, *etc.*) and plant (*e.g.*, lentil, quinoa, maize, hemp,

188 *etc.*) sources in young and older adults [26].

#### 189 3.1.2. Protein blends

190 A protein blend combines two or more intact proteins. The scientific rationale for ingesting a protein 191 blend is that combining more than one type of protein will capitalise on the unique digestive 192 properties of each type of protein, allowing for an optimal blood availability of amino acid to increase 193 the amplitude and duration of MPS stimulation. The efficacy of a protein blend for the stimulation of 194 MPS was first evaluated by two studies in young adults that compared the ingestion of skimmed 195 milk (casein + whey protein) with isolated soy protein [27,28]. The finding of a greater acute post-196 exercise response of mixed-MPS and NBAL with milk compared to soy protein ingestion [27] was 197 extended by a longitudinal study that measured a greater increase in LBM after 12 wk of resistance 198 training in the milk compared to soy protein condition [28]. However, a recent study demonstrated 199 milk ingestion elicits a similar post-exercise response of MPS compared with beef ingestion in young 200 adults [29]. Two other studies compared the post-exercise response of MPS to ingestion of a protein 201 blend (soy + casein + whey protein) with an isolated whey protein control in young adult men [30,31]. 202 The protein blend composition was 25% whey protein, 50% casein and 25% soy protein. Conditions 203 were matched for total EAA (~8.8 g) and leucine (~1.9 g) content, however, the blend condition 204 comprised a greater total protein content compared with the whey protein condition (~19.3 vs. ~17.7 205 g). As anticipated, in both studies [30,31] the amplitude of rise in amino acid concentrations during 206 the early postprandial period was greater in the whey protein compared with protein blend 207 condition. However, with the exception of valine, and to a lesser extent phenylalanine, ingestion of 208 the protein blend failed to sustain elevated plasma amino acid (leucine, isoleucine, total BCAA) 209 concentrations during the late (2-4 h) postprandial period compared with whey protein ingestion. 210 Since the casein source included in the blend was sodium caseinate, which exhibits similar transient 211 amino acid kinetics to whey protein [17,18], it was not surprising that no difference in the duration 212 of increased amino acid availability was observed between protein blend and whey protein 213 conditions. In both studies, the response of mixed [30] and myofibrillar [31] MPS followed the same 214 pattern. At 0-2 and 0-4 h post protein ingestion, a similar increase in the response of MPS above basal 215 values was observed between conditions. These data suggest that whey protein ingestion is similarly 216 effective compared to a dose-matched (for leucine content) protein blend for the stimulation of MPS. 217 Interestingly, despite a similar amino acid profile during late recovery, over the 2-4 h postprandial 218 period, the response of MPS was increased above basal rates in the protein blend condition only. 219 Although these data imply that the duration of MPS stimulation may be extended with a protein 220 blend compared with an isolated type of intact whey protein, this observation also may be an artifact 221 of the additional total protein content of the blend condition compared with the whey protein control. 222 Moreover, the physiological significance of stimulating a greater response of MPS during the late (2-223 4 h) acute recovery period, without augmenting the aggregate (0-4 h) acute response of MPS, is not 224 obviously apparent. Future work also is warranted to evaluate the response of MPS and SMM to 225 other protein blend combinations, including egg, rice and hemp protein. The implications of these 226 data are of particular relevance to the protein industry that is interested in producing cheaper and 227 more sustainable protein-based products.

An important line of research worthy of future investigation is comparing the response of MPS to animal and plant-derived protein sources, or blends of plant-derived proteins [26]. In particular,

230 combinations of plant-derived protein sources with divergent amino acid profiles that when 231 combined allow for a 'complete' EAA profile (e.g., relative to animal-derived proteins, wheat is low 232 in lysine yet high in methionine, whereas lentil is high in lysine, yet low in methionine). A recent 233 study reported a similar increase in SMM with the post-exercise ingestion of pea protein compared 234 with whey protein [32]. However, the limited information available in humans implies that animal-235 derived protein sources stimulate a greater response of MPS compared with plant-derived protein 236 sources [15,28]. However, the overall completeness, applicability and quality of evidence are weak. 237 To date, a limited number of controlled laboratory studies in humans has directly compared the acute 238 response of MPS to ingesting an animal-derived compared to a plant-derived protein source. No 239 acute metabolic studies in humans have compared other animal-derived protein-rich foods, such as 240 eggs, yoghurts, meat and fish with other plant-derived protein-rich foods, such as lentil, maize, pea, 241 rice and wheat. The implications of these data are particularly relevant to the protein industry for 242 aiding the production of more economically and environmentally sustainable protein-based products 243 [33].

#### 244 3.1.3 Manipulating amino acid composition

245 Several studies have investigated the impact of manipulating the composition of an amino 246 acid/protein source for stimulating an increased response of MPS to amino acid/protein ingestion [34-247 37]. In terms of amino acid profile, the leucine content of a protein source is of particular importance 248 for stimulating a postprandial response of MPS. Leucine not only provides substrate for the synthesis 249 of new muscle protein, but also serves as a key anabolic signal for skeletal muscle by activating 250 enzymes within the mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) signalling pathway [38]. Indeed, the 251 leucine threshold hypothesis [39] has been proposed to explain the observation that young muscle 252 appears relatively sensitive to the anabolic action of small (~1 g) quantities of ingested leucine, 253 whereas older muscle requires ≥2 g of leucine (typically contained in ~20 g of high-quality protein) 254 to increase MPS above resting rates [40]. Accordingly, studies have manipulated amino acid 255 composition in two ways: by adding leucine to an amino acid source or modifying the leucine profile 256 of an AA source. In addition, longitudinal studies have investigated the impact of chronic leucine 257 supplementation on long-term changes in SMM.

258 Based on available evidence, the efficacy of adding leucine to an amino acid source or modifying the 259 leucine profile of an amino acid source for increasing the stimulation of MPS depends on the 260 interaction of two factors. These factors include the leucine content of the original amino acid source 261 and whether the amino acid source was ingested at rest or after exercise. Two studies in older adults 262 demonstrated the addition of leucine (3.5/2.5 g) to a casein protein (30/20 g) source increased the 263 resting postprandial stimulation of mixed-MPS [39,41]. Conversely, studies in young [42] and older 264 [43] adults reported a similar post-exercise response of mixed-MPS to coingesting leucine (3.4 g) with 265 a whey protein (16.6 g) plus CHO mixture compared to whey protein alone. With regards to 266 modifying leucine profile, studies in young [34] and older [44,45] adults matched the dose of ingested 267 EAA (6.7/10/10 g) between conditions, but manipulated the leucine content (2.8/3.5/3.5 g) of the 268 ingested EAA source. Study outcomes were dependent on the dose of ingested EAA. Leucine-269 enriched EAA ingestion increased the resting postprandial [34] and post-exercise [44] response of 270 MPS to a suboptimal (for maximal stimulation of MPS- see Amino Acid/Protein dose) dose of EAA, 271 but not to an optimal (for maximal stimulation of MPS) dose of EAA in young [34,45] and [44] older 272 adults. In summary, on the basis of available evidence, leucine coingestion and leucine enrichment 273 effectively stimulates an increased resting postprandial response of MPS to an amino acid source, 274 such as casein protein, that contains a relatively low leucine content (vs. whey). In contrast, adding 275 leucine to an amino acid source such as whey protein that already contains sufficient leucine to 276 stimulate a pronounced rise in blood leucine concentration, and thus surpass the leucine threshold 277 for stimulation of MPS, is surplus to increasing post-exercise rates of MPS.

278 Other studies have manipulated the leucine content of a protein source. A recent study in young 279 adults measured the resting postprandial and post-exercise response of myofibrillar-MPS to ingestion 280 of 25 g whey protein (optimal dose) compared to 6.25 g of whey protein (suboptimal dose) in young 281 adults [46]. Whereas the protein dose was not matched between conditions, leucine intake was 282 equated by adding 2.25 g of leucine (to match the leucine content of the 25 g whey protein dose) to 283 the lower protein dose, thus introducing a leucine-enriched suboptimal dose of whey protein. The 284 impact of leucine-enriching a lower dose of whey protein on the stimulation of MPS differed between 285 resting and post-exercise conditions. In rested muscle, ingestion of a leucine-enriched 6.25 g dose of 286 whey protein resulted in rates of MPS similar to those stimulated with ingestion of a 25 g dose of 287 whey protein. Likewise, ingestion of an EAA-enriched (with the exception of leucine) suboptimal 288 dose of whey protein stimulated a similar MPS response compared with the ingestion of 25 g whey 289 protein. However, notwithstanding the equivalent amount of leucine ingested, an inferior post-290 exercise response of MPS was observed with ingestion of 6.25 g of leucine-enriched whey protein 291 compared to 25 g of whey protein. This differential response between rested and exercised states may 292 be reconciled by the enhanced ability of muscle to utilise ingested amino acid for the stimulation of 293 MPS following exercise [47]. Hence, it may be speculated that in this study [46], EAA availability was 294 rate limiting for potentiating the post-exercise response of MPS to a suboptimal dose of whey protein. 295 These results support the notion that, rather than blood leucine availability per se, the availability of 296 a full complement of EAA is the critical factor for stimulating a maximal response of MPS during 297 exercise recovery.

298 A follow-up study in young adults by the same authors [35] demonstrated a greater post-exercise 299 response of MPS to ingestion of 25 g of whey protein compared with ingestion of a low dose (6.25 g) 300 of whey protein plus additional leucine (totally 3 g of leucine) when ingested as part of a mixed 301 macronutrient beverage. However, ingestion of a higher dose of leucine added to 6.25 g of whey 302 protein (totalling 5 g of leucine) resulted in a similar post-exercise response of myofibrillar-MPS to 303 ingestion of 25 g of whey protein. Collectively, these data [38,47] suggest that enriching a suboptimal 304 dose of whey protein with leucine may potentiate the post-exercise response of MPS to a suboptimal 305 protein dose, but only when the suboptimal protein dose is consumed alongside other 306 macronutrients and is leucine-enriched above a certain undetermined threshold.

307 Based on the rationale that older adults often experience low levels of appetite [48] and routinely 308 consume suboptimal doses of protein, a similar study [49] has recently been conducted in older 309 adults. The ingestion of a leucine-enriched (1.2 g) suboptimal dose of EAA (3 g) stimulated a similar 310 resting postprandial and post-exercise response of myofibrillar-MPS compared to a 20 g whey protein 311 bolus containing 9.6 g of EAA and 2 g of leucine. These data suggest that a less satiating (low energy) 312 leucine-enriched suboptimal dose of EAA stimulates a similar resting and post-exercise response of 313 myofibrillar-MPS compared with ingestion of a larger bolus dose of whey protein in older adults. 314 Hence, fortifying a suboptimal quantity of protein with leucine may be a viable strategy for 315 promoting MPS and increasing SMM in older adults. Given that the optimal dose of whey protein to 316 stimulate a maximal post-exercise response of MPS has been shown to exceed 20 g in older adults 317 (see Amino acid/Protein dose), it remains unknown if a leucine enriched protein source rescues a 318 maximal response of MPS in older adults. Future studies should be designed to provide a similar 319 comparison between a leucine-enriched suboptimal protein dose (i.e. 20 g of whey protein) and an 320 optimal protein dose (~40 g of whey protein) in older adults during exercise recovery.

Finally, two studies in older adults have evaluated the impact of chronic leucine supplementation on outcome measures of SMM and reported equivocal findings [50,51]. Whereas 2 wk of leucine supplementation increased the resting postabsorptive and postprandial response of MPS to a suboptimal dose of EAA plus CHO in one study [50], Verhoeven et al. [51] reported no change in LBM after 12 wk of leucine supplementation. Based on these contrasting findings, the efficacy of a prolonged period of leucine supplementation on outcome measures of SMM remains unclear in older

327 adults and warrants investigation in young adults.

#### 328 3.1.4 Protein form

329 Three studies in older adults have manipulated the form of an amino acid/protein source and 330 measured resting postprandial rates of MPS [17,52-54]. Koopman et al. [52] compared liquid 331 supplements of intact casein and casein hydrolysate and reported a greater blood amino acid 332 availability, and a trend for a greater response of MPS, to ingestion of casein hydrolysate. The same 333 research group recently reported that ingestion of casein in it's naturally occurring milk matrix form 334 resulted in a reduced blood amino acid availability (possibly due to delayed amino acid 335 digestion/absorption kinetics), but did not modulate postprandial rates of MPS compared with 336 ingestion of isolated intact micellar casein [53]. A similar result was reported by Pennings et al. [54] 337 whereby the ingestion of minced beef, that is easily masticated and digested, stimulated a more rapid 338 increase in arterialised blood EAA availability compared with an equivalent amount of intact steak, 339 however no difference in the 6 h postprandial response of MPS was observed between conditions. 340 These findings [17,53] suggest that, at least in the early resting postprandial period, the rate of blood 341 amino acid availability does not translate into an increased stimulation of MPS. However, it must be 342 recognised that these findings are in the context of a single feeding period under resting conditions. 343 Whether a more rapid blood amino acid availability stimulates a greater reponse of MPS in the 344 context of repeated feeding and/or during exercise recovery deserves consideration.

#### 345 3.2 Amino acid/protein dose

346 Several acute metabolic dose-response studies have been designed to characterise the optimum dose

of amino acid/protein contained in a single serving for the maximal stimulation of MPS [10,47,55-58].

348 These studies examined a range of protein sources, including free crystalline amino acid, intact

349 proteins and complete foods in young and older adults at rest and during exercise recovery.

#### 350 3.2.1 Young adults

351 The optimal dose of ingested amino acid/protein for stimulating a maximal resting postprandial 352 response of MPS is well established in young adults. In the context of a realistic meal-like setting, 353 ingesting a standard portion of lean beef (containing ~30 g protein) was shown to stimulate a similar 354 response of MPS compared with an over-sized portion of lean beef (containing ~90 g protein) [59]. 355 Although a study design that compares only two conditions does not allow for a true dose-response 356 relationship to be characterised, these data suggest a saturable protein dose exists regarding the 357 feeding-induced stimulation of MPS. Consistent with the notion of a saturable dose of protein, we 358 [47] and others [10] observed a plateau in the resting postprandial response of MPS to ingesting 10 g 359 of EAA (2.5 < 5 < 10 = 20 g) [10]or 20 g of intact whey protein (10 < 20 = 40 g) [47]. The ingestion of 20 360 g EAA [10] or 40 g intact protein [47] failed to elicit an additional resting postprandial stimulation of 361 MPS. Instead, we [47] reported a pronounced stimulation of irreversible amino acid oxidation and 362 ureagenesis, implicating a shift toward fates of ingested amino acid other than MPS. Taken together, 363 these data [10,47] often are interpreted to suggest that, when expressed as an absolute intake, 10 g of 364 EAA (equivalent to ~20 g of protein) is the optimal dose for stimulating a maximal response of MPS 365 in young adults at rest. Expanding these data, a retrospective analysis of previous studies revealed 366 that, expressed relative to body mass, the optimal protein dose for maximal stimulation of MPS in 367 young adults at rest is 0.24 g/kg body mass/serving [60].

In young adults, the optimum dose of protein to ingest during exercise recovery is less well defined. We [47] and others [61] reported no statistical difference in the post-exercise response of MPS to ingestion of 20 compared to 40 g of protein. However, it was intriguing that both studies [47,61] reported an ~10% increase in mean values for the post-exercise stimulation of MPS when the protein dose was increased from 20 to 40 g. Given that increasing the dose of ingested protein from 10 to 20 g stimulated a ~20% greater post-exercise response of MPS without a marked increase in amino acid oxidation of urea production, a diminishing return in terms of stimulating MPS, at the very least, was

- 375 achieved with ingestion of >20 g of protein [47,61]. The physiological relevance, in terms of long-term
- 376 changes in SMM, of a 10% increase in the response of MPS during exercise recovery is unknown and 377
- warrants further investigation.

#### 378 3.2.2 Older adults

379 In older adults, the optimal dose of ingested protein at rest and during exercise recovery is not well 380 established. Consistent with young adults, Symons et al. [59] reported a similar resting postprandial 381 response of MPS to ingesting 113 g (~30 g protein) compared with 340 g (~90 g protein) of lean beef. 382 Moreover, the seminal EAA dose-MPS response study by Cuthbertson and colleagues [10] reported 383 a similar resting stimulation of myofibrillar-MPS with the ingestion of 20 ( $\approx$ 40 g protein) or 40 g ( $\approx$ 80 384 g protein) of EAA in older adults. Hence, in the context of stimulating a postprandial response of 385 MPS, a saturable dose of ingested protein also exists in older adults. However, several recent dose-386 response studies of intact protein sources [55,57,58] and protein-rich foods [56] in middle-aged (~60 387 y) [56] and older adults [55,57,58] failed to observe a saturated response of MPS to graded protein 388 intakes. These studies reported a dose-dependent, graded increase in the response of MPS to 389 increasing doses (0-40 g) of intact whey protein [55,58], soy protein [57] and minced beef [56]. Since 390 no previous study has observed a plateau in the response of MPS to increasing doses of ingested 391 protein [55-58], the optimal single bolus dose of ingested protein for stimulating a maximal response 392 of MPS in older adults cannot be firmly established.

393 Despite being inconclusive, two lines of evidence provide an informed estimate of the optimal protein 394 dose for stimulating a maximal response of MPS in older adults. First, previous work has 395 demonstrated that ingesting >36 g of beef protein [56] or 35-40 g of whey protein [55,58] stimulated a 396 pronounced increase in the rate of irreversible amino acid oxidation. These data [55,58] imply the rate 397 of MPS was approaching, or had indeed reached, an upper limit with ingestion of 35-40 g of protein. 398 Second, the maximal effective protein dose at rest is higher in older compared with young adults. A 399 retrospective analysis of previous studies [60] estimated that, when expressed relative to body mass, 400 the dose of protein required to stimulate a maximal response of MPS at rest was ~68 % greater in 401 older (~0.40 g/kg body mass) vs. young (0.24 g/kg body mass) adults. Moving forward, to refine the 402 optimal protein dose for the maximal stimulation of MPS in middle-aged or older adults, future 403 studies should measure the postprandial response of myofibrillar-MPS to 0, 20-40 and 50-60 g doses 404 of ingested protein.

405 In addition to age, several other nutritional, physiological and/or methodological factors could 406 impact the optimal dose of protein for the maximal postprandial stimulation of MPS in young and 407 older adults. Protein source has been shown to affect the dose-response relationship in older adults. 408 A greater dose of soy protein ( $\geq$  40 g) [57] was required to stimulate a comparable postprandial MPS 409 response to whey ( $\geq$  20 g) protein [58]. As such, a rightwards shift in the dose-response relationship 410 was observed with soy protein compared with whey protein. Intuitively, these findings suggest that 411 protein source alters the optimal protein dose for the maximal stimulation of MPS in older adults.

412 Physiological factors, including body composition and sex-differences, also may impact the dose-413 response relationship. It is intuitive that individual differences in SMM will affect the optimal protein 414 dose for maximal stimulation of MPS. However, no study has compared the dose-response 415 relationship between individuals with higher vs. lower amounts of SMM. Hence, a protein dose 416 exceeding 20 g may be optimal in young adults with high amounts of SMM, particularly during 417 exercise recovery when muscle is sensitised to protein ingestion [8]. Whereas a sex-specific difference 418 in the response of MPS to exercise and nutrition has not been consistently shown in young adults 419 [62-64], sexually dimorphic postprandial responses of MPS have been shown in older adults [65]. 420 Thus, although not directly evaluated, these data suggest that sex-specific differences are more likely 421 to affect the optimal single bolus dose of protein in older compared with young adults. Future studies 422 are warranted to test this thesis.

#### 423 3.3 Amino acid/protein timing

424 The majority of studies have focused on the timing of amino acid/protein ingestion after exercise.

Whereas resistance exercise stimulates MPS for at least 48 h during recovery, the magnitude of the post-exercise response of MPS diminishes over time (i.e., 3 > 24 > 48 h) [66]. This time resolution could

427 be explained by the notion that, as time elapses, muscle progressively loses anabolic sensitivity to

- 428 protein ingestion. An extreme interpretation of this concept is the belief that the anabolic
- 429 responsiveness of skeletal muscle will be impaired- or even abolished- if an amino acid/protein
- 430 source is not ingested within as little as 45-60 min following exercise [67]. This time period has been
- 431 coined the "anabolic window of opportunity."
- 432 The timing of amino acid/protein ingestion before and during exercise also should be considered in
- the context of stimulating MPS. In theory, amino acid /protein ingestion before and/or during exercise
- 434 increases blood amino acid concentrations at a time when blood flow also is increased by exercise.
- 435 During exercise, a net loss of muscle protein is apparent because MPS is either decreased [68] or
- 436 unchanged [69], whereas MPB is (generally) increased [66]. Moreover, the stimulation of MPS by
- 437 protein ingestion is refractory, with a latent period of ~1 h [70]. Intuitively, ingestion of an amino acid
- 438 /protein source before or during exercise, will increase amino acid delivery to skeletal muscle during
- 439 and immediately post-exercise and counteract the net loss of muscle protein during exercise and in
- the initial post-exercise recovery period by providing additional substrate for the stimulation of MPS.

Scientific rationale exists also to support the notion that post-exercise amino acid/protein ingestion should be timed in relation to CHO intake. The post-exercise response of NBAL to CHO ingestion is delayed until ~1 h after CHO ingestion [71]. Given that the post-exercise response of NBAL to ingested amino acid is rapid [72], one may speculate that delaying protein ingestion for 1 h after CHO ingestion may superimpose these muscle protein anabolic responses. Thus, it could be argued that amino acid/protein timing should consider the timing of other ingested nutrients, as well as proximity to exercise.

#### 448 3.3.1 Time-focused vs. time-divided amino acid/protein timing

- 449 Surprisingly few studies have compared the impact of time-focused (amino acid/protein ingestion in 450 close temporal proximity to exercise) and time-divided (amino acid/protein ingestion at times other 451 than close to exercise) amino acid/protein ingestion on MPS or SMM. Acute metabolic studies do not 452 support the notion that timing amino acid/protein ingestion immediately post-exercise is critical for 453 optimizing the muscle anabolic response. These data reveal a similar response of MPS and NBAL to 454 EAA ingestion 1, 2 or 3 h following resistance exercise in untrained young men [73-75]. Hence, it has 455 been argued that the purported "anabolic window of opportunity" may extend beyond the first hour 456 or less following exercise [76]. In addition, a recent study demonstrated protein ingestion 24 h 457 following resistance exercise resulted in a greater response of MPS than protein ingested with no 458 exercise [77]. A direct comparison of the response of MPS to ingestion of protein immediately and 24 459 h following exercise has yet to be made and thus the stimulation of MPS could, in fact, be slightly 460 greater with protein ingestion immediately following, rather than 24 h after exercise. Nonetheless, it 461 is clear, at least in young adults, that skeletal muscle is still responsive to protein ingestion for at least 462 24 h following exercise [77]. Thus, according to results from acute metabolic studies, the importance 463 of immediate post-exercise amino acid /protein ingestion does not seem as critical as has often been 464 championed [67,78].
- 465 Longitudinal endpoint studies that investigated the efficacy of timing amino acid/protein ingestion
- in close temporal proximity to exercise for increasing SMM, report inconsistent and, in some cases,
- 467 puzzling results. A study by Cribb and Hayes [79] reported the ingestion of protein immediately
- before and after each training session (time-focussed protein supplementation regimen) over a 10 wk
- training period resulted in greater improvements in LBM, cross-sectional area of type II muscle fibres

470 and strength compared with ingestion of protein before breakfast and prior to bedtime (time-divided 471 protein supplementation regimen). Similarly, Esmarck et al. [80] reported SMM gains after 12 wk of 472 resistance training in a group of older adults that consumed a protein supplement (within a mixed 473 macronutrient beverage) immediately after a training session, whereas no change in SMM and 474 negligible strength gains were achieved in the group that consumed protein 2 h after exercise. 475 However, it is easy to be sceptical about these data [80]. The magnitude of muscle hypertrophy 476 measured with immediate post-exercise ingestion of the protein supplement was similar to that 477 reported in other resistance training studies with older adult volunteers that included no particular 478 feeding intervention [81,82]. Hence, on closer inspection, the results of this study [80] suggest that 479 immediate post-exercise ingestion of protein does not confer any advantage over resistance training 480 with unsupervised nutrition, at least in older adults. Moreover, it should be noted that waiting 2 h to 481 ingest the protein actually inhibited the 'normal' anabolic response to resistance training, making 482 these results [80] puzzling and difficult to interpret. In contrast, other longitudinal studies in young 483 adults fail to support the notion that protein ingestion in close temporal proximity to resistance 484 exercise is critical for maximising SMM. Accordingly, studies by Burk et al. [83] and Hoffman et al. 485 [84] reported time-focused protein supplementation resulted in a similar [84]or inferior [83] change 486 in LBM after training compared to time-divided protein supplementation. Given that resistance 487 training is an established anabolic stimulus for increasing SMM, it may be considered surprising that 488 no improvement in LBM was observed following the training period with the time-focused 489 supplementation regimen.

#### 490 3.3.2 Pre- vs. post-exercise timing of protein ingestion

491 Other timing considerations may hold similar importance as post-exercise protein timing for 492 optimising the response of MPS. Indeed, ingestion of an EAA plus CHO mixture immediately pre-493 exercise stimulated a greater response of MPS during 2 h of exercise recovery compared with 494 ingesting an identical EAA-CHO mixture immediately post-exercise [74]. However, an acute study 495 of similar design in young adults, but this time ingesting intact whey protein, reported no difference 496 in NBAL during exercise recovery between pre and post-exercise whey protein conditions [85]. 497 Moreover, the exercise-induced stimulation of MPS was similar when a protein-containing meal was 498 ingested 2 h prior to exercise [86] compared with when an amino acid source was provided after 499 exercise [9,87]. Accordingly, a longitudinal endpoint study reported similar increases in LBM after 500 12 wk of resistance training between groups of older adults that consumed a protein blend 501 supplement either before or after each exercise session [88]. Taken together, these data [9,86-88] 502 suggest that skeletal muscle is, at the very least, comparatively responsive to amino acid/protein 503 ingested pre or post-exercise.

#### 504 3.3.3. Timing of amino acid/protein ingestion in relation to other nutrients

505 Only one study has tested the hypothesis that separating, rather than combining, the post-exercise 506 ingestion of amino acid and CHO increases the muscle anabolic response during exercise recovery 507 [75]. However, despite the separate ingestion of EAA and CHO stimulating a transient physiological 508 increase in NBAL in the first 2 h of recovery, no difference in NBAL was demonstrated between 509 combined or separate ingestion of EAA and CHO over an extended 6 h recovery period [75]. Thus, 510 from a practical perspective, separating ingestion of EAA and CHO should be considered unlikely to 511 be an important component of protein recommendations for maximising the muscle protein anabolic 512 response during exercise recovery. Instead, a more simple approach of ingesting CHO and EAA 513 together is sufficient to engender increased muscle anabolism.

#### 514 3.3.4 Bedtime protein feeding

515 The timed ingestion of amino acid/protein in relation to overnight recovery is a topic of recent

516 investigation [89,90]. It has been proposed that ingesting a protein source that releases amino acids

- 517 slowly into the blood immediately prior to sleep promotes a more positive NBAL during overnight
- recovery [89,91]. By maintaining increased blood amino acid availability throughout the night, it may
- 519 be possible to stimulate MPS and/or attenuate MPB, thereby improving NBAL during overnight
- 520 recovery from exercise- a period often associated with an extended phase of negative NBAL. Indeed, 521 the timed ingestion of protein before bedtime has been shown to increase the nighttime stimulation
- 521 the timed ingestion of protein before bedtime has been shown to increase the nighttime stimulation 522 of MPS in young and older adults [89,91], and thus may be an effective strategy to increase muscle
- 523 anabolism during overnight recovery. However, in previous studies [89,90], no time control
- 524 condition was included, *e.g.*, protein ingestion at a time point other than before bedtime. Hence, the
- 525 impact of protein timing *per se* cannot be distinguished from the increased protein intake over the
- 526 day.
- 527 3.4 Amino acid/protein pattern

528 Amino acid/protein pattern accounts for the dose, timing and frequency of ingestion. A balanced 529 pattern is characterised by the equal spread of total daily protein intake between servings, whereas, 530 an unbalanced pattern-shown to be the norm for young [92] and older [93] adults-is characterised 531 by consuming a large proportion of total daily protein intake in a single serving, usually in the 532 evening meal. The aggregate daytime response of MPS is a direct function of the cumulative MPS 533 response to each individual protein serving during the course of a day. In theory, the divergent 534 profiles of blood amino acid concentrations associated with manipulating the timing and frequency 535 of amino acid/protein intake during the course of a day will explain differences in the cumulative 536 response to MPS to balanced and unbalanced protein meal patterns. Accordingly, acute metabolic 537 studies have investigated the influence of amino acid /protein feeding pattern on the aggregate 538 daytime stimulation of MPS while longitudinal endpoint studies have investigated the influence of 539 protein meal pattern on chronic changes in SMM and strength.

540 3.4.1 Young adults

541 Four studies in young adults have investigated the influence of protein pattern on the daytime 542 stimulation of MPS or chronic changes in SMM [94-97]. Acute metabolic studies are not comparable 543 given the discrepancies in research design including exercise state (rest vs. post-exercise), and protein 544 feeding regimen (intact protein vs. mixed macronutrient meals). Moreover, the unbalanced pattern 545 implemented in these study designs may be considered somewhat extreme and not reflective of real-546 world practice. These studies provide ~70% of total daily protein intake in the evening meal [96] 547 which is more than typically consumed during dinner under free-living conditions. Areta et al. [94] 548 demonstrated a greater 12 h post-exercise response of myofibrillar-MPS to distributing 80 g of whey 549 protein as 4 × 20 g servings compared with 2 × 40 g servings 6 h apart, or 8 × 10 g servings 1.5 h apart. 550 In a more practical study designg, Mamerow et al. [96] demonstrated a greater 24 h resting 551 postprandial response of MPS to a balanced meal pattern that distributed 90 g of protein evenly 552 between three meals (3 × 30 g), spaced 3.5 - 4 h apart vs. a conventional [92,93] unbalanced protein 553 meal pattern that biased 70% of daily protein intake towards the evening meal. Hence, despite an 554 equal total daily protein intake (90 g) between conditions, the aggregate daytime stimulation of MPS 555 was greater with a balanced compared to unbalanced protein feeding pattern. A theoretical 556 explanation for the improved aggregate daytime stimulation of MPS with a balanced protein meal 557 pattern may be attributed to the muscle full effect [98] and thus repeatedly reaching the leucine 558 threshold for the maximal acute stimulation of MPS. However, these data are not supported by a 559 recent short-term acute metabolic study [97] that demonstrated no difference in the 3 h resting 560 response of MPS to ingestion of 15 g of EAA either as a single bolus or distributed between four small 561 boluses. Moreover, the only published chronic study by Arnal and colleagues [95] reported no 562 changes in LBM following 14 days of either a balanced or unbalanced protein meal pattern. However, 563 a drawback of this study [95] was that 2/4 meals contained 13-15 g of protein, rather than the optimal 564 20 g dose [47,61]. At this juncture, acute [96,97] and chronic studies [95] in young adults investigating 565 the influence of protein pattern on MPS and SMM provide inconsistent results. Future studies in

566 young adults should be designed to compare a balanced vs. unbalanced distribution pattern of daily 567 protein intake on the daytime stimulation of MPS (under reasting and post-exercise conditions) and 568 training-induced changes in SMM, whilst taking into consideration the established optimal dose of 569 protein contained in a single serving for young adults.

#### 570 3.4.2 Older adults

571 Two studies have investigated the influence of protein meal pattern on the response of MPS and SMM 572 in older adults [99,100]. In contrast to studies in young adults, no study has reported that protein 573 meal pattern affects the aggregate response of MPS to total daily protein intake. Kim and colleagues 574 [100] reported no difference in the 22 h response of MPS to an unbalanced pattern that biased 65 % 575 of daily protein intake towards the evening meal compared with a balanced pattern that spread total 576 daily protein intake evenly between meals. In this study [100], the balanced pattern consisted of three 577 meals that each contained a protein dose (~37 g) that was likely sufficient for stimulating a maximal 578 resting postprandial response of MPS in older adults [55,58,100]. However, the statistical power of 579 this dataset [100] may be considered to be insufficient given that the sample size of the unbalanced 580 group was only four participants. The only published chronic study by Arnal and colleagues [99] 581 reported no changes in LBM following 14 d of either a balanced or unbalanced protein meal pattern. 582 Thus, on the basis of statistical analysis, results are consistent between acute [100] and chronic [99] 583 studies that investigate the influence of protein pattern on MPS and SMM. To date, no study has 584 investigated the influence of protein feeding pattern on the aggregate post-exercise response of MPS 585 to daily protein intake in older adults.

586 3.5 Macronutrient coingestion

Irrespective of whether protein is consumed in food (mixed-macronutrient meal) or supplement
(liquid beverage or solid bar) form, it is often coingested with CHO and/or fat. Hence, it is important
to understand the impact of macronutrient coingestion on MPS and SMM.

590 3.5.1 Carbohydrate coingestion

591 Macronutrient coingestion alters physiological factors known to regulate the stimulation of MPS. 592 CHO coingestion increases plasma insulin concentrations compared to CHO [101] or protein 593 [102]alone and the anabolic action of insulin on muscle protein metabolism is two-fold. First, under 594 conditions of sufficient amino acid availability [103,104], insulin increases amino acid delivery to 595 skeletal muscle (a rate limiting step in the stimulation of MPS) by increasing capillary recruitment 596 and microvascular perfusion [105]. Second, insulin initiates a suppression of MPB via the ubiquitous 597 proteasome pathway [106]. Therefore, CHO coingestion theoretically has the potential to facilitate 598 the stimulation of MPS and suppress the stimulation of MPB.

599 A systematic series of hypothesis-driven studies has investigated the influence of CHO coingestion 600 on the response of muscle anabolic response to an amino acid/protein source. Based on available 601 evidence, the efficacy of CHO coingestion to increase the muscle anabolic response and SMM in 602 response to amino acid/protein ingestion is dependent, at least in young adults, on the dose of 603 ingested amino acids/protein. Two acute metabolic studies indicate that coingesting CHO with ~6 g 604 of amino acid increased the muscle protein anabolic response in young adults, compared with the 605 independent ingestion of AA [107,108]. These findings of a 60 % greater utilisation of ingested amino 606 acid [108] and suppression of urinary 3-MH excretion [107]- a crude marker of MPB- in response to 607 exercise with CHO-amino acid coingestion indicate a greater acute stimulation of MPS and inhibition 608 of myofibrillar-MPB, respectively. Accordingly, the findings of Bird et al. [107] were extended to a 609 longitudinal training study [109] whereby young adults achieved greater gains in type II muscle fibre 610 cross-sectional area after 12 wk resistance training when consuming a CHO plus amino acid-611 containing supplement during each exercise session compared with an amino acid-only supplement.

- 612 As detailed previously, in the absence of sufficient blood amino acid availability [9], the anabolic
- 613 action of a CHO-mediated increase in blood insulin concentration is likely to target a suppression of
- 614 MPB, rather than stimulation of MPS [3]. Prior work demonstrated the insulin-mediated suppression
- 615 of MPB to be linearly graded up to an insulin concentration of ~30 uU/mL [106]. Taken together, these
- 616 data in young adults suggest the increased muscle anabolic response to coingesting CHO with small
- 617  $(\leq 6 \text{ g})$  doses of EAA is mediated by a suppressed response of MPB [106,107,109]. To date, no study 618
- has investigated the impact of coingesting CHO with a suboptimal dose of protein (rather than amino
- 619 acids) on MPS in young or older adults.
- 620 A handful of acute metabolic studies in young [3,102,110,111] and older [110,112] adults report that 621 coingesting CHO with a moderate/large dose of amino acid/protein elicits no change in rested 622 [102,110,112] or post-exercise rates of MPS [3,102,111] or MPB [102]. Consistent with these data 623 [3,102,110-112], similar improvements in LBM, fibre-specific muscle hypertrophy and strength were 624 reported when resistance-trained young males consumed either a protein or mixed protein-CHO 625 supplement immediately after each exercise bout of a 10 wk resistance-training period [79]. This 626 absence of an additive effect of protein and CHO was evident despite CHO coingestion stimulating 627 a robust increase in circulating insulin concentrations [102,111]. Given that basal insulin 628 concentrations are known to be sufficient for stimulating MPS in the presence of amino acid [106], 629 the insulin response to moderate or large protein doses could be considered sufficient to saturate 630 mTORC1 signalling, thus rendering the CHO-mediated increase in insulin concentration permissive 631 for increasing the stimulation of MPS.
- 632 3.5.2 Fat coingestion
- 633 Preliminary, albeit inconsistent, evidence also suggests that fat coingestion increases the muscle 634 anabolic response [113-115]. Mechanistic studies have demonstrated that increasing free fatty acid 635 concentrations in blood had no impact on the responsiveness of NBAL to amino acid ingestion 636 [114,115]. Moreover, results from a recent study demonstrated that coingesting milk fat with casein 637 protein failed to increase the postprandial stimulation of MPS in older adults [53]. In contrast, a study 638 of greater physiological relevance by Elliot et al. [113] demonstrated that ingestion of whole-fat milk 639 stimulated a superior post-exercise utilisation of ingested amino acid compared with ingestion of 640 skimmed-fat milk matched for volume (239 g) and similar in protein content (8.0 vs. 8.8 g, 641 respectively). To date, no study has directly assessed the response of MPS to coingesting fat with an 642 amino acid/protein source under rested or exercised conditions in young or older adults.
- 643 A topic of recent interest is the role for fish oil derived long chain n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (LC
- 644 n-3PUFA) for increasing MPS and SMM [116-119]. Studies in young and middle-aged [119] or older
- 645 [118] adults have demonstrated that 8 wk of LC n-3PUFA supplementation increased MPS rates, and 646
- the phosphorylation status of signalling proteins (mTORC1-p70S6k1 signalling) known to regulate 647
- MPS, in response to the intravenous infusion of combined amino acids and insulin. Irrespective of 648
- age, no change in basal MPS was observed with LC n-3PUFA supplementation [118,119]. These data 649 [118,119] suggest that, rather than exerting a direct anabolic effect on muscle protein, LC n-3 PUFA
- 650 sensitise skeletal muscle to potent anabolic stimuli, such as amino acids and insulin. Moreover, a
- 651 prolonged period of supplementation with LC n-3PUFA was shown to enhance muscle mass and
- 652 function at rest [117] and resistance training-induced improvements in muscle strength and
- 653 functional capacity in older adults [116]. However, in this study [116], no measurements of SMM
- 654 were collected and therefore the impact of LC n-3PUFA supplementation, in combination with
- 655 exercise training, on chronic changes in SMM remains unknown.
- 656 Two causal mechanisms are proposed to underpin the anabolic action of LC n-3PUFA. First, LC n-
- 657 3PUFA may exhibit intrinsic muscle protein anabolic properties by modifying the lipid profile of the
- 658 muscle phospholipid membrane [118,119]. These structural changes in membrane properties may
- 659 activate membrane-bound anabolic signalling proteins, such as focal adhesion kinase (FAK) and the

- 660 downstream anabolic target proteins, protein kinase B (PKB) and mechanistic target of rapamycin
- (mTORC1) [120]. Secondly, the potential anabolic action of LC n-3PUFA supplementation also may
- be related to a modulated inflammatory response [121]. The next logical step for this new research
- topic is to investigate the role of LC n-3PUFA supplementation in sensitising skeletal muscle to more
- 664 physiologically relevant anabolic stimuli, such as resistance exercise and protein feeding in young 665 and older adults.
- and older adults

### 666 4. Conclusions and future perspectives

667 Protein guidelines for increasing or preserving SMM are more complex than simply recommending 668 a total daily amount of protein. We have identified several factors involved in protein nutrition, 669 including the source, dose, timing, pattern and coingestion of other nutrients that independently, 670 concurrently and additively influence MPS under resting and post-exercise conditions. 671 Consequently, understanding the interaction between these aforementioned factors of protein 672 nutrition and MPS is critical for contextualising protein recommendations for increasing or 673 preserving SMM in healthy young and older adults.

674 *4.1 Implications for practice* 

675 On the basis of published literature collated in this review, we propose the following evidence-based676 implications for practice.

- 677 i. Protein guidelines should be customised to the population (young or older adults) and situation
  678 (resting or post-exercise condition) of interest. For example, (a) the optimal dose of protein for
  679 maximal stimulation of MPS during exercise recovery is greater for older compared to young
  680 adults and (b) whey protein has been shown to stimulate a greater response of MPS compared
  681 with soy protein during exercise recovery, but not at rest.
- 682 ii. Chronic periods of leucine supplementation will not necessarily facilitate long-term
  683 improvements in SMM, given that a full complement of EAA is critical for stimulating a
  684 maximal and sustained response of MPS.
- 685 iii. Manipulating the leucine content of a protein source that lacks quality (*i.e.*, the protein source
  686 constitutes a low leucine composition) and/or quantity (*i.e.*, an insufficient protein dose for the
  687 maximal stimulation of MPS) effectively rescues a submaximal resting postprandial stimulation
  688 of MPS. This phenomenon has particular implications for older adults or other populations that
  689 often experience difficulties in consuming a sufficiently large dose of protein in each meal
  690 serving to stimulate a maximal response of MPS.
- iv. Timing protein intake in close temporal proximity to exercise is recommended, although not critical, for stimulating a maximal response of MPS.
- v. Coingesting CHO with a suboptimal dose of amino acid/protein may be an effective strategy for 'rescuing' a submaximal response of MPS associated with a suboptimal dose of amino acid protein. However, no additional benefit is gained from adding CHO to a dose of amino acid /protein known to saturate the response of MPS.
- vi. Any beneficial impact of fat coingestion on MPS is likely mediated by the anabolic action of the
   LC *n*-3 PUFA.
- 699 4.2 Implications for research

Table 1 extracts from the main body of text a multitude of future academic research directions in the field of protein nutrition. As a general point, current protein recommendations are primarily informed by research designs whereby protein beverages are administered commonly as an isolated protein source. By characterising the response of MPS to the single and multiple bolus ingestion of mixed-macronutrient meals or supplements, it will be possible to tailor more practical and

705 personalised nutrition advice regarding what foods/supplements should be consumed, how much of

- a food/supplement should be consumed and when food/supplements should be consumed on bothrest and exercise training days.
- 708 In terms of future perspectives, from a methodological standpoint we are entering an exciting period 709 to study the role of protein nutrition in modulating muscle protein metabolism [122]. Specifically, a
- to study the role of protein nutrition in modulating muscle protein metabolism [122]. Specifically, a
   recently validated oral deuterium oxide isotope tracer protocol allows for the relatively non-invasive
- 711 measurement of free-living, integrated rates of MPS over an intermediate time period (*e.g.*, 1-14 days)
- 712 [123,124] that, in the future, should be extended to longer time periods [125]. Hence, quantifying
- 713 fraction-specific rates of MPS to represent skeletal muscle protein remodelling in response to
- 714 perturbations such as resistance exercise and amino acid ingestion is possible over acute,
- intermediate and potentially chronic time periods. Such tools will inevitably expand our existingknowledge regarding protein considerations for optimizing SMM in both healthy young and older
- 717 adults.
- 718 As a closing remark, there are a distinct lack of data in females and middle-aged (40-55 year old)
- adults. Since sex-differences in the response of MPS to feeding have been reported [63,65], future
- studies should investigate the impact of protein feeding on MPS and SMM in cohorts of female
- volunteers.
- 722
- 723 **Table 1:** Proposed future research directions to promote understanding of how several factors of
- 724 protein nutrition interact to impact the stimulation of muscle protein synthesis (MPS) at rest and
- 725 during exercise recovery in young and older adults.





	Source	Dose	Timing	Pattern	Coingestion
Source	Can plant protein sources stimulate a similar response of MPS compared to animal protein sources in young and older adults? Do liquid-based forms of protein stimulate a greater response of MPS compared to solid-based forms of protein foods?		What impact does protein source have on the optimal timing of protein ingestion in young adults?	What impact does protein source have on the optimal protein meal pattern for the daytime stimulation of MPS in young and older adults?	
Dose	What impact does protein source have on the optimal protein dose for stimulation of MPS in young adults?	What is the maximal effective dose of protein for the stimulation of MPS in older adults? What influence does individual LBM have on the optimal protein dose for stimulation of MPS?			What impact does macronutrient coingestion have on the optimal protein dose for stimulation of MPS in young adults?
Timing	How does the response of MPS during exercise recovery compare between the pre-exercise ingestion of		Does the overnight stimulation of MPS with bedtime protein feeding translate into long-term gains in SMM?		What impact does macronutrient coingestion have on the optimal protein timing for stimulation of

	casein <i>vs.</i> the post-exercise ingestion of whey protein?			MPS in young and older adults?
Pattern		What impact does protein dose have on the optimal pattern of protein feeding for the daytime stimulation of MPS?	What is the impact of protein feeding pattern, combined with exercise, on the aggregate daytime stimulation of MPS in older adults?	
Coingestion		What impact does coingesting CHO with a suboptimal dose of protein have on MPS in young and older adults?	Does the ingestion of protein within mixed macronutrient meals impact the optimal protein meal pattern for the daytime stimulation of MPS?	What is the impact of LC <i>n</i> - 3PUFA supplementation on the response of MPS to exercise and protein feeding in young and older adults?

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The grid has been designed to illustrate the independent or interactive effects of the several factors of protein nutrition on the stimulation of muscle protein synthesis. The placement of each question is dependent on the factor of protein nutrition address by the question. For example, the question 'Can plant-based protein sources stimulate a similar response of MPS compared with animal-based protein sources?' relates to the independent impact of *protein source* on MPS and thus fits in the protein source-protein source box. The question, 'What impact does coingesting CHO with a suboptimal dose of protein have on the stimulation of MPS in young and older adults?' relates to the interactive effect of *protein dose* and *macronutrient coingestion* on MPS and thus fits in the protein dose-macronutrient coingestion box. SMM, skeletal muscle mass. MPS, muscle protein synthesis. LC *n*-3PUFA, long chain *n*-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

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737 Suntory to Oliver C. Witard. 738 Author Contributions: All authors planned the review; OCW, SLW and LSM conducted the searching, collation 739 and extraction and information from eligible studies; OCW, SLW and LSM wrote the initial draft of the 740 manuscript. OCW, SLW, LSM, AH and KDT contributed to subsequent drafts and approved the manuscript for 741 submission. 742 **Conflicts of Interest:** No conflict of interest Abbreviations 743 744 The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript: 745 BCAA: branched chain amino acids 746 EAA: Essential amino acids 747 LBM: lean body mass 748 MPS: muscle protein synthesis 749 MPB: muscle protein breakdown 750 NBAL: net muscle protein balance 751 SMM: skeletal muscle mass 752 753 **References:** 754 755 [1] Wolfe, R.R. The Underappreciated Role of Muscle in Health and Disease. Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 2006, 84, 475-756 482. 757 758 [2] Mitchell, C.J.; Churchward-Venne, T.A.; Cameron-Smith, D.; Phillips, S.M. Last Word on Viewpoint: What 759 is the Relationship between the Acute Muscle Protein Synthetic Response and Changes in Muscle Mass? 760 J.Appl.Physiol (1985.) 2015, 118, 503. 761 762 [3] Glynn, E.L.; Fry, C.S.; Drummond, M.J.; Dreyer, H.C.; Dhanani, S.; Volpi, E.; Rasmussen, B.B. Muscle 763 Protein Breakdown has a Minor Role in the Protein Anabolic Response to Essential Amino Acid and 764 Carbohydrate Intake Following Resistance Exercise. Am. J. Physiol. Regul. Integr. Comp. Physiol. 2010, 299, 765 R533-R540. 766 767 [4] Rennie, M.J.; Edwards, R.H.; Halliday, D.; Matthews, D.E.; Wolman, S.L.; Millward, D.J. Muscle Protein 768 Synthesis Measured by Stable Isotope Techniques in Man: The Effects of Feeding and Fasting. Clin. Sci. 1982, 769 63, 519-523. 770 771 [5] Biolo, G.; Maggi, S.P.; Williams, B.D.; Tipton, K.D.; Wolfe, R.R. Increased Rates of Muscle Protein 772 Turnover and Amino Acid Transport After Resistance Exercise in Humans. Am. J. Physiol. 1995, 268, E514-773 E520. 774 775 [6] Kimball, S.R.; Jefferson, L.S. Control of Protein Synthesis by Amino Acid Availability. Curr. Opin. Clin.

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