

Scientific ways to help us live longer

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The science behind longevity — how long humans live — continues to improve with each passing year. Here are **some scientifically proven ways to help you live longer** .



While we haven't discovered the true "fountain of youth," research suggests that lifestyle choices, particularly diet and exercise, play a huge role in determining whether we live a long and healthy life. That's good news because it means you have more control over the factors that influence longevity than you might think.

While we still can't change our genes, science shows that genetic makeup is just one piece of the complex longevity puzzle. There's also a growing focus on healthy aging rather than simply extending life.

Boost your Mediterranean or Japanese diet

When it comes to diets that improve longevity and prevent disease, the Mediterranean diet and the Japanese/Okinawa diet are the best.

Although they may seem very different culturally and geographically, they both emphasize similar diets. They focus heavily on fish as a source of protein, which is rich in brain- and heart-healthy fats. They also include whole vegetables (fresh or fermented) and limit processed foods & sugar.

' Remember, there is no 'quick fix' diet that will produce positive results. When thinking about longevity, we must consider diets and changes that will have long-term and, most importantly, sustainable effects! ' says Alyssa Kwan, MS, RD, clinical nutritionist in cardiology at Stanford Medicine.

If you want to start changing your diet to better fit these methods but don't know where to start, here are some simple tips.

' Focus on one ingredient at a time, and make sure it's something that fits your personal, religious, or cultural preferences. For example, if you like lentils, use them instead of white rice in your veggie bowl. But if you don't like fish, focus on other protein sources ,' says Kristin Kirkpatrick, MS, RD, a dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic and coauthor of Regenerative Health.



Losing weight

Obesity is linked to many chronic diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, and even a shortened lifespan. But instead of just trying to lose weight, learn about the ideal weight for your age, gender, and height. Losing even 5% of your body weight can have a significant impact on everything from blood sugar to blood pressure.

' Maintaining a healthy weight throughout all stages of life is important for healthy aging and improving both longevity and health, ' said Frank B. Hu, PhD, Professor and Chair of the Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health .

'Clinical trials have shown that weight loss achieved through lifestyle changes, medications, or bariatric surgery is associated with a reduced risk of chronic disease, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and some cancers, as well as premature death,' Hu said.

Reduce sitting

Chances are you sit more than is healthy. It's probably not your fault: you sit when you're using your computer, watching TV, or meeting friends at a coffee shop. But as our lives become more sedentary, science has focused on the negative effects that can have on our longevity and our risk of disease.

'Sedentary behavior, such as prolonged TV viewing, is associated with increased risk of chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and premature death. This risk is largely due to increased obesity and displacement of physical activity,' Hu said.

Even if you exercise regularly, sedentary behavior has serious health risks. So don't just think about trying to make up for lazy days with a hard workout. Think about ways to increase physical activity throughout the day, even if it's just walking around your house or office while you exercise regularly.



Exercise — the more the better

Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do for your health. And it doesn't just involve your body. These benefits extend to your brain and cognitive health, too.

New research published in December 2024 found that in older adults, cardiovascular fitness is a great indicator of brain health across many cognitive domains, including memory. Finding ways to increase physical activity and cut down on sedentary time in fun ways is key to maintaining this habit.

The CDC recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity.

'The two things we see in older adults that contribute to a decline in quality of life as they age are cognitive and functional changes, which can make them less able to stand. Exercise is something that impacts both of those factors,' Katherine T. Ward, MD, chief of geriatric medicine at Stanford Medicine, told Healthline.

Boyce adds that establishing routines that can reduce sedentary behavior and increase activity at the same time is a great start.

'You can also incorporate physical activity into your daily life. For example, get off the train one stop early to go for a walk or incorporate behaviours like only watching TV when you're exercising,' she says.

Quit smoking

Yes, you've heard it before, but the science is consistent: quit smoking if you want to live longer.

In a study led by Frank Hu and published in 2018, researchers found that 'never' smoking was one of five key factors contributing to longevity. The others were:

1. Maintain a healthy weight
2. Regular physical activity
3. Healthy diet
4. Consume alcohol in moderation

Cigarette smoking is linked to about one in five deaths in the United States each year, amounting to more than 480,000 deaths each year.

Why is smoking so deadly? It's linked to everything from cancer and heart disease to diabetes and COPD. Quitting smoking not only reduces your risk of all of these diseases, it can also add up to ten years to your life.

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