

Longevity: How to Live to 100

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Certainly, genes are important and you're much more likely to reach 100 if your parents and grandparents lived to a ripe old age. But even if they passed away at a relatively young age, maybe it was because they were heavy smokers or they indulged in other unhealthy activities and so they died before fully reaching their lifespan potential.

The question is what should you be doing now to not only improve the quality of your life but also lengthen your lifespan and possibly make it to 100? There are no guarantees but researchers have found centenarians tend to share many of the traits outlined below – traits experts advise you integrate into your daily life to improve your chances of reaching 100.

Eat Natural Whole Foods

First, start your day by eating a fiber-rich whole-grain cereal in the morning. This helps maintain stable blood sugar levels all day. The reason is that people who eat a good breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day, and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight.

To live longer, age better and slow cognitive decline, eat plant-based diet of colorful fruits and vegetables, dark whole-grain breads and cereals, beans and nuts, some fish and poultry; and avoid red meat, nutrient-lacking sweets, white bread, white flour, white rice, sugar-laden cereals and other artificial and refined products.

To maintain a healthy weight, prepare your main meal of the day as follows: $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate should a protein (chicken, fish, etc), $\frac{1}{4}$ should be a starch (potato, rice, etc) and $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate should consist of vegetables or salad.

Exercise at Least 30 Minutes a Day

A large number of studies have documented the benefits of exercise to improve muscle mass, bone density, balance, mental acuity and mood. Walking in your neighborhood or at a local mall for at least 30 minutes every day is a good start. Add muscle-building exercises done twice a week for an added benefit. The key is to exercise consistently, everyday – day after day, week after week, year after year – for as long as you're physically able.

Lead A Wholesome Life

The average life expectancy of Seventh Day Adventists is almost 90 – more than a decade longer than the average American. It's interesting to note that most Seventh Day Adventists do not smoke or abuse alcohol. They tend to eat a vegetarian diet consisting of fruits, vegetables, beans and nuts, get plenty of exercise and focus on family and community. In other words they lead a wholesome life and seem to live longer.

Get in a Groove

Many centenarians tend to live a very routine life, eating the same diet and doing the same kinds of activities all their lives. For example, they go to bed and wake up at the same time each day – a good habit that keeps your body in the equilibrium that can be easily disrupted as you get older. And remember to get at least six hour of sleep every day. In fact, most people who reach the century mark make sleep a top priority.

Don't Retire Completely

In the Chianti region of Italy, which has a high percentage of centenarians, retirees spend most of their days working in their gardens – cultivating grapes or vegetables. Although technically retired, they remain active. But if farming isn't for you, try tutoring children in a local elementary school, try volunteering as a docent at a museum, etcetera. In other words, even when you retire get involved and stay active

Stay Connected

Having regular social contacts is vital to avoiding depression, particularly common in elderly widows and widowers – which can lead to premature death. In fact, some psychologists believe that one of the biggest benefits seniors get from activities such as walking with a buddy, or taking a class, is the social interaction.

Learn to Deal with Stress

Find a way to manage stress that works for you and you will live longer. Exercise, yoga, meditation, tai chi, or just deep breathing for a few moments are all used successfully by many long-lived people to manage stress.

Floss Every Day

Lastly a surprise: floss every day. A recent New York University study showed that daily flossing is an excellent way to reduce the amount of gum-disease-causing bacteria in your mouth, bacteria which could enter your blood stream triggering inflammation of your arteries and increasing your risk of heart disease. So flossing every day is not only good for your gums, teeth and cardiovascular system but it might also help extend your life.

Bottom line: Try to incorporate all or at least most of the preceding traits and tips into your daily routine and you just might reach the century mark!