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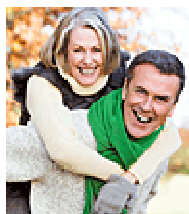
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Travel the Road to Longevity



Harvard scientists have observed that the shortest-living Americans are Native American populations in South Dakota, living an average lifespan of 66.5 years, whereas the longest-living Americans are Asian-American women residing in Bergen County, N.J., who live to an average lifespan of 91.1 years. That's a nearly 25-year difference! Just think about what you could do with 25 "extra" years, particularly if you could enjoy them with sound body and mind. Here's what science says about the best ways to stay healthy, active and vital into your older years.

1. **Choose Wisely.** A study that followed 20,000 men and women, ages 45 to 79, for 13 years found that poor lifestyle choices can shorten lifespan by as many as 14 years. The researchers found that study subjects with the lowest number of healthy behaviors were four-times more likely to die during the study period, most notably from [cardiovascular disease](#). In fact, participants with the lowest healthy lifestyle scores had the same risk of dying as someone with the highest healthy lifestyle scores who was 14 years older.
2. **Why Risk It?** Adding support to the above, a study of 23,153 German men and women, ages 35 to 65 years, found that four lifestyle factors slashed the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer by 80 percent: never smoking, body mass index of 30 or less, exercising 3.5 hours a week, and eating a healthy diet. The study authors concluded: "The message is clear. Adhering to 4 simple healthy lifestyle factors can have a strong impact on the prevention of chronic diseases."
3. **Don't Weight Around.** A 12-year study involving more than 11,000 adult participants found that underweight people were 70 percent more likely to die during the study period compared to people of normal weight, and that [the extremely obese](#) had a 36 percent increased risk of death compared to their healthier counterparts. Interestingly, carrying a few extra pounds was found to be protective against early death; modestly overweight subjects were 17 percent less likely to die early, suggesting that when it comes to weight, eating habits, etc., moderation may be the key.

As you can see, staying as healthy as possible for as long as possible and enjoying your golden years, rather than being weighed down by illness and disease, is in large part up to you and the choices you make now, regardless of age. The practical choices we make on an everyday basis are what help us achieve living an extended healthy lifespan. Take a little time and evaluate your current health in conjunction with your health care provider. Small, progressive changes can make a big difference in how long you live and the quality of life you enjoy.

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Understand Your Fiber Facts

Dietary fiber, often referred to as "roughage," is the edible portion of plant cell walls that is resistant to digestion, but is an extremely beneficial component of our diets. Fibers such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, and whole grains also have high amounts of vitamins and minerals necessary for healthy body function. And of course, a huge side benefit of eating foods rich in fiber is that they taste good!



Not only does fiber help ward off many diseases, but it's also been shown to aid in weight loss by reducing food intake at meals. This is because fiber-rich foods take longer to digest and thus result in an increased feeling of fullness and satiety. In addition, the more gradual absorption slows the entrance of sugar into the bloodstream, thereby preventing large blood glucose and insulin spikes that can lead to binge eating.

Plant foods contain both types of fiber in varying degrees, according to the plant's characteristics. Examples of foods rich in soluble fiber are fruits, vegetables, brown rice, barley, and nuts. Most of insoluble fibers come from the bran layers of cereal grains. Examples of foods rich in insoluble fiber are wheat bran and whole-grain breads and cereals. Remember, both are important for good health, so your diet should include a balance of foods rich in both types.

There is no recommended daily allowance (RDA) for fiber, but the American Dietetic Association recommends eating 20-35 grams of dietary fiber per day or 10-13 grams for every 1,000 calories in the diet. The average American significantly falls short of the recommended amount of fiber, consuming on average only 5-10 grams per day. Here are some easy ways to increase fiber intake:

- Choose whole [fruits and vegetables](#) (with peels when possible) instead of juices.
- Replace white flour with whole-wheat flour in all baked goods.
- Select whole-grain bread, pasta and cereals in place of similar processed versions.
- Choose brown rice over white rice.
- Replace meat with [alternate protein sources](#) such as beans, lentils or other legumes.

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Too Little Sleeping = Too Much Snacking



Here's an important reason to get the kids off to bed: Too little sleep can lead to a bad habit: overeating. According to a recent study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, reduced sleep time (less than six hours compared with more than eight) is associated with an increase in energy consumption - often in the form of snacks - without any increase in energy expenditure.

In other words, if kids sleep less, they tend to eat more, but don't expend energy during the extra time they're awake.

So, what could they possibly be doing that doesn't burn any energy? Perhaps they're studying for next week's exam or writing that long-overdue birthday card to grandma. But probably not. In fact, the chances are good that they're playing on the computer, watching television, texting their friends or pursuing some other sedentary activity, which is never a good thing, particularly when combined with additional caloric intake. That's a bad combination that could lead to chronic overeating and weight gain, not to mention fatigue, irritability, and reduced performance attributable to lack of sleep.

Talk to your doctor about the importance of adequate sleep and what you can do to ensure you and your family get the sleep they deserve every night.

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