

How you live and what you eat could add – or subtract – over 25 years to your life span

The factors which determine who's likely to live longest

Your social status affects your life expectancy

Chapter 1

Extending your lifeline

They say that life begins at 40, but new research into ageing has shown that for many, the fourth decade is a period of accelerated ageing. This is a time when many of us stop taking regular exercise, and the stresses of work or family push us into smoking and drinking more, sleeping less, eating junk foods.

According to Canadian gerontologist Dr Richard Earle, women on the threshold of 40 can expect to age a staggering 18.8 biological years by the time they make 50, while their menfolk put on 15.2 years.

That's the bad news. The good news is that not everybody ages this fast. Even better news is that if you combine diet, exercise and lifestyle changes, together with a little medical help, you too can beat the clock.

Sex, stress and sustenance

Even within groups of similar people, there are huge differences in the rates of ageing. Some look old before their time, others retain youthful looks and good health into their 50s and beyond. What's the secret? How can you get into the slow lane?

Edinburgh-based clinical psychologist Dr David Weeks has been studying a group of people he terms the 'Super Young' – people who look and act at least 10 years younger than their age. One thing his 3,500 volunteers had in common was an active and varied sex life. "Slow agers make love more than other people. They are very carnal – they come across as very happy people who enjoy sex both in terms of quality and quantity," says Dr Weeks.

It's highly complex!

You have about 60 trillion cells in your body.

In **each** cell thousands of different chemical reactions are taking place every single minute of every day!

Each of these reactions depends upon an individual specialist enzyme. And most enzymes depend upon your intake of adequate vitamins and minerals.

WHY DISEASE STRIKES : **Extending your lifeline**

The British Geriatric Society take a similar line, pointing out that sexual activity boosts the heart (it is, after all, a form of exercise), and the immune system. The biological effects of happiness and pleasure are increasingly coming under study. We know, for example, that sex stimulates the brain to release Growth Hormone, which has reparative and anti-ageing effects on the body.

Attitude is also important. “The Super Young tend to be optimists,” says Weeks, “and the recipe for slow ageing would include staying active, curious, involved and stimulated. A younger partner helps!”

Stress, on the other hand, is one of the most important causes of over-rapid ageing. “Worriers age more quickly,” says Dr Stephen Webster of the British Geriatric Society, “Someone with worry lines etched in their face almost certainly has prematurely old arteries.”

Then there’s nutrition. Three meals a day is being replaced, in anti-ageing circles, by grazing – providing this is not on snack foods. Snacking on nuts, cereals and pulses, plus plenty of fruit and vegetables, with the odd fish thrown in, puts less stress on the body, is easier to digest and may be better for bone and muscle development.

Next add anti-oxidant supplements – but with a twist. Nutritionists have abandoned the idea that it’s enough to take just one anti-oxidant such as Vitamin C. The secret is synergistic anti-oxidant combinations. It’s no coincidence that when the traditional (ayurvedic) Indian ‘Pot of Immortality’ (Amrit Kalash), was analysed recently, it was found to contain a host of plant-based anti-oxidants and adaptogens.

If you’re interested in slowing the clock, this book will show you how in detail. To get you started, check how healthy your lifeline is currently looking using the guide overleaf. It’s designed to show you how your life literally lies in your hands. And how a simple regime of moderate exercise, de-stressing, a sensible diet with supplementation and an active sex life can make all the difference.

Slower ageing

Simply increasing lifespan isn’t the objective. Almost all families have an example of elderly relatives clinging to a poor quality of life that distresses themselves and their carers.

My objective in writing this book is to show how to slow the ageing process **and** maximise a healthy life span.

WHY DISEASE STRIKES : **Extending your lifeline**

**Life-
line**



ELIMINATE THE NEGATIVE

Smoking

It ages the heart, circulation, skin and lungs, and can contribute to an early menopause, osteoporosis, heart disease and cancer.

– 6 years

Junk food diet

Too much carbohydrate, saturated fat and salt; and not enough vitamins, minerals, flavonoids and fibre leads to diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and cancer.

– up to 5 years

High cholesterol

If over 6.7 mmol/l it will increase your risk of a heart attack.

– 2 years

Too many sweet and starchy foods

These damage proteins in the body increasing the risk of diabetes and diabetic complications.

– 5 years

Alcohol

Over 2 units a day (with the exception of red wine) is bad news. Really heavy drinking loses up to 10 years. Ages the liver, kidneys, heart and brain.

– 1 to 10 years

Overweight

More than 10% overweight increases the risk of diabetes and hypertension.

– 3 years

Unfit

Heart rate: if not normal within 10 minutes of vigorous exercise, you're so unfit it's going to cost you 1– 2 years. If it's over 80 beats per minute at rest, lose another year.

– 1 to 2 years

Stressed out

You're over-stressed if you are always tired, sleep badly, and are often worried or irritable. Stress drives up blood sugar and lipids, contributing to heart disease; and depresses the immune system, leaving you vulnerable to infection and cancer.

– 4 years

High blood pressure

If over 135/95, strokes, heart attacks and kidney failure are on the cards.

– 3 years

Sun-worship

Lose up to 10 years in appearance. Too much sun ages the skin and can cause skin cancer.

– 2 years

Excessive exercise

While exercise is very beneficial, over-exercising increases free radical damage and speeds ageing.

– 3 years

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Alcohol – moderate, particularly red wine

+ 1 to 5 years

While more than 2 units of alcohol a day speeds up ageing, less than 2 units a day helps to make blood platelets less sticky, cutting the risk of heart attacks and adding a year to life expectancy. Red wine is the exception – it contains flavonoids and if your daily intake is between 2 and 3 glasses a day, add up to 5 years.

Nutrition

+ 7 to 10 years

Low calorie diets increase the life span of lab animals, and are associated with long life in human communities too – so no more than 1800 calories a day unless you're physically very active. The diet should include plenty of green, red and blue fruits and vegetables, plus nuts, pulses, olive and peanut oil, animal protein – preferably fish or game – and few sweet or starchy foods.

Anti-oxidant and micro-nutrient supplements

+ up to 20 years

Vitamins A, C and E, plus a mix of carotenoids, flavonoids and the minerals copper, manganese, zinc and selenium slow down the ageing process in a number of organs including the heart and blood vessels.

Vegetarian diet

+ 2 to 5 years

Since vegetarians eat more fruit and vegetables containing anti-oxidants, fibre and no animal fats, they live longer.

Regular exercise

+ 1 year

Moderate exercise is not only de-stressing and slimming, but life-extending too. It tones up the cardiovascular system, and a 60-year-old who exercises regularly can retain up to 80 per cent of the strength and stamina he or she had at 25.

Sex

+ 2 years

An active (safe) sex life can be an excellent form of exercise, and good for morale too, boosting the cardiovascular and immune systems. A good sex life is one of the common factors found in slow agers.

Stress-reducing techniques

+ 3 years

Whether it's yoga, an hour in the garden or an evening's worth of your favourite soap, relaxation is the key. There are many other de-stressing techniques.

Social interactions

+ 2 years

A good social life with plenty of opportunities to see your friends is associated with slower ageing and a longer life.

(Data from actuarial tables and published scientific papers)