Aging And Lifestyle Essay, Research Paper

Aging and lifestyle 1

Abstract

Lifestyle is an important predictor of “ How well a person ages “. Important factors such as eating right and exercising regularly are major components of a healthy lifestyle that play an important role on how long a person can live. The focus of this research is to explain the relationship between aging and the food you eat, how often you exercise , and your mental state . Finally it will focus on different ways of maintaining a decent lifestyle in order to live longer and happier.

Aging and lifestyle 2

Many people within the U.S are in their 70s and 80s chronologically but have the physically fit bodies of people in their 30s or 40s. Why? Because they have chosen to modify their diets to include more nutritious food and their lifestyles to include more exercise (strength training and aerobics). The components of healthy lifestyle include many things. A few of these examples are eating right , exercising regularly and keeping your mind calm and content.

One might think that some of these youthful seniors have some secret for staying young or that they are gifted genetically. Actually, in many cases, they live a consistently healthy lifestyle, eating highly nutritious foods and working out vigorously several days a week. Does this mean that you can stay in great physical and mental shape longer if you follow their example? According to recent studies, it looks like the answer is astoundingly “yes.” For example: Many diseases, including cancer and hypertension, appear to be related to the weakening of the immune system as a result of aging. Many nutrients, including vitamin A, beta-carotene and vitamins C and E, have anti-cancer effects (Shils, M., and Young, V. Modern Nutrition in Health and Disease).

Antioxidants continue to prove themselves as anti-aging nutrients. In one study, 45 elderly subjects took an antioxidant formulation of beta-carotene, vitamins C and E, selenium and zinc for one year. At regular intervals, the researchers checked something called “lipid peroxides” in all of the subjects. These are products from the oxidation of fats and are good indicators of the level of oxidation taking place in the body. Oxidation is the corrosion of cellular membranes that is thought to be responsible for aging.

Before the study began, the elderly subjects had high levels of lipid peroxidation. After being on the antioxidant formula for three months, the subjects were compared with a control group of healthy young adults. The results showed that the level of lipid peroxidation in the elderly group fell to levels lower that that of the control group and remained there for the rest of the study (Source Colgan, M. “Nutrition and Fitness News: Antiozidant Cocktail Slows Aging.”). You can see why it’s so important to take an all-purpose vitamin supplement.

Diets rich in potassium appear to have a protective effect against hypertension, the major cause of strokes, according to research. Potassium has also been shown to reduce the blood pressures of hypertensive patients. The reasons for this are unclear, yet may be associated with potassium’s involvement in physiological systems that regulate blood pressure (. Rammohan, M., and Juan, D. “Effects of a Low-Calorie, Low-Protein Diet on Nutritional Parameters, and Routine Values in Non obese Young and Elderly Subjects.”). Foods such as potatoes are high in potassium. To be on the nutritionally safe side, take a mineral supplement daily.

Essential fatty acids (EFAs) also seem to reduce blood pressure. In a study of healthy people in Italy, Finland and the United States, researchers found more hypertensives among Finns that among the other populations. The dietary difference was that the Finns ate more saturated fats and less polyunsaturated fats than the others, whose diets were high in linoleic acid (a polyunsaturate). When a group of Finns (aged 40 to 50) consumed

a low-fat diet high in polyunsaturated fats and low in saturated fats, their blood pressure dropped significantly (. Simmons, J. “Is the Sand of Time Sugar?” Longevity

(June 1990). Evening Primrose Oil is an excellent source of EFAs. Besides EFAs, foods believed to have blood pressure lowering properties include vegetables, legumes, fish and whole grains.

The ability of the cells in your body to synthesize new protein is critical for bolstering immunity and warding off infection. This is one of the many reasons why ample protein is so vitally needed for good health. You can become protein-deficient very quickly. The effect of a nine-day low-protein diet was studied in six young and six elderly (average age 72) healthy subjects. At the end of the study period, nitrogen balance and levels of certain blood components were measured. In both groups, nitrogen balance decreased (nitrogen balance indicates whether you are losing or gaining lean mass). Most significant was the reduced level of transferrin in the blood. Transferrin shuttles iron to sites of need in the body. Studies have shown that when transferrin levels fall, possibly due to a protein deficiency, the immune system is weakened.

Simons J. in his book emphasized that “deterioration in nutritional status resulting from [a low-calorie, low-protein diet] can increase vulnerability to both infection and chronic disease, especially in the elderly, who are often on multiple medications and who have diminished protein reserve(. Rammohan, M., and Juan, D. “Effects of a Low-Calorie, Low-Protein Diet on Nutritional Parameters, and Routine Values in Non obese Young and Elderly Subjects.”). The Lean Bodies Program emphasizes ample amounts of protein. Don’t shortchange yourself on this vital “anti-aging” food.

Sugar converts easily to body fat, but did you know that it may speed up the aging process? Research suggests that sugar rushes into the bloodstream as glucose, which starts a reaction that causes proteins in cell membranes to “cross-link.” Cross-linking is thought to be responsible for hardening of the arteries, skin wrinkling and cataracts (source 4). Anyone following the Lean Bodies Program is already eating a very low-sugar diet — and thus doing their bodies a world of good. Many people over age 50 have glucose intolerance, which can turn into type II diabetes. Research shows that a diet high in fiber can help control diabetes and maybe even prevent it. This is because of fiber’s ability to keep glucose from entering the bloodstream too fast (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Human Nutrition Research Center. “A Guide to Dietary Fiber and Health.” Prevention (November 1987)). Moderate exercise helps regulate glucose too.

An active lifestyle enhances functional capacity in later years. That is the finding of a study of older men and women who underwent exercise testing during the 1985 World Masters Games in Toronto. When the subjects were tested on cycle ergometers, their aerobic power was above average, when compared to non-athletes of the same age, and matched that of sedentary 25-year-olds (Kavanaugh, T., and Shephard, R. “Can Regular Sports Participation Slow the Aging Process? Data on Masters Athletes.” The Physician and Sportsmedicine (June 1990)). Exercise, including weight training and aerobics, can improve quality of life among the elderly. In an six-month study of 56 men and women (age 70 to 79), researchers compared the effect of weight training or a walk/jog to the effects of no exercise. The exercisers improved their strength and cardiovascular fitness dramatically. Studies of older people who take up weight training are shedding new light on the importance of building strength and lean mass in this population. There is no question that weight training programs can help older people stay active longer and live more independent lives (Work, J. “Strength Training: A Bridge to Independence for the Elderly.”). It improves cardiovascular fitness, may help slow the bone loss that occurs with osteoporosis, helps lower blood sugar in people with diabetes, and helps control cholesterol. In addition, exercise promotes weight loss, muscle strength, and a general feeling of well-being. As the body works, it requires more oxygen and the heart beats faster. Exercise increases the body’s ability to use oxygen, which enables a person to exercise more without feeling tired. Exercise must reach a certain level to provide this benefit. The target heart rate can be a guide to reaching a level of exercise that provides cardiovascular fitness. However, this guide should be used cautiously late in life, when silent heart disease may exist. Some forms of exercise strengthen the back muscles making them less prone to injury and strain. Other types of exercise help prevent bone loss by strengthening the bones and keeping them from becoming brittle. To provide bone strength, weight-bearing exercises are best. For instance, walking and lifting weights are forms of exercise that are weight bearing, whereas swimming and cycling, although they are good forms of cardiovascular conditioning, are much less likely to prevent bone loss.

Studies suggest that lack of exercise contributes to frailness and weakness in elderly people. It is now well known that the quality of life into golden years may be positively influenced by exercise, according to a major study of 16,936 Harvard alumni. In the study, researchers found that those alumni who lived an active lifestyle, with regular exercise, lived up to two years longer than those who were sedentary (Work, J. “Strength Training: A Bridge to Independence for the Elderly.”). It is difficult to predict how a person will age because everyone have their own biochemical individuality.

It is clear that many elements of nutrition and fitness are within one’s control. Those elements can enhance your quality of life. Naturally, the earlier you start on a healthy lifestyle the better your health may be in later years. But it is never too late to start.

As far as science is concerned, the methods for extending our life span will be found in genetic engineering and we have not yet discovered the secrets. It helps to be born into a family where people have a long life span. Since people rarely die of old age, it would, of course, pay to keep ourselves free from disease, poisonous substances, and risk of fatal accident. As far as human wisdom and anecdotal evidence is concerned, there are many suggestions were made by clinical nutritionists Cliff Sheats, some of which may have validity:

? Drink alcohol in moderation. Heavy drinking can cut down a lifespan by years. Do not use street drugs.

? Stop smoking. Smoking two packs a day cuts seven years from the normal life span.

? Eat nutritiously. Don’t eat too much sugar, fat, and highly processed foods. Eat a low-fat diet consisting of high fiber, fresh vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. The famous Framingham Heart Study concluded “When we eat a diet sparse in meats, fats, and sugar, we do a lot better.”

? Exercise, exercise and exercise. The one word that most life-extending experts agree upon is exercise, and they all recommend walking.

Until the 1930s, exercise was a way of life for most Americans. We had to walk everywhere, maintain large vegetable gardens, chop wood, and keep house without appliances. These activities maintained most older people at an acceptable level of fitness. By the mid-1950s, the American lifestyle had become so sedentary that heart disease was epidemic. Physiologists have found that genuine fitness could be produced only by aerobic-type exercise. Those safe for older people include: walking, swimming, bicycling, and any type of rhythmic exercise performed at a moderate pace.

Maintain your weight at the normal level. Based on the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company’s height-weight charts, 33% of American women and 45% of American men are currently overweight. Research confirms that almost every healthy long-lived person has been lean and wiry and few have been overweight. Diets that lose weight only to gain it again are not considered healthy. The way to lose weight is to exercise and gradually cut out fats, sugars, and too much food. In other words, “change your lifestyle.”

? Get a good night’s sleep. If you can’t sleep, find methods to relax, increase your exercise time, and get involved in interesting activities–not television.

? Ignore your chronological age. Age is not the number of birthdays that have passed. It is an attitude, an awareness, a feeling. The ability to have the self-image of a younger person is characteristic of most long-livers. Youthfulness is focused on activity. So keep active and maintain a youthful attitude. Remember, “You’re only as old as you feel.”

? Learn to relax. Here are some suggestions:

1. Deliberately slow the pace of your life.

2. Live fully in the present moment.

3. Do only one thing at a time.

4. Don’t be too concerned about saying “no”; turn down demands on your time that stress you out.

5. Learn to accept that if you cannot complete a job today that it’s acceptable to finish it later.

6. Spend some time alone each day.

7. To enjoy life to the fullest, learn to see, smell, touch, and feel everything around you right now.

? Develop a powerful will to live, and never give up. What most distinguishes long-livers from the rest of us is their indestructible capacity to rebound from misfortune and adversity.

? Make important goals. As soon as you achieve any goal, replace it with another immediately. Choose only goals that you can succeed in achieving. Otherwise, you are defining dreams, not goals.

? Be a success. Success is an essential component in creating a powerful will to live. We can readily experience the exuberance of success by making a list of small successes, each of which can be attained within 15 minutes, like cleaning your bicycle or the interior of your car. Achieving several small successes can fortify your will to live and make it easier to attain more important goals that can leave you flushed with the inspiration of success.

? Create a newer and stronger self-image. Think about your strengths and let yourself be forgiven for your weaknesses. Walk tall and erect with a quick step. Let yourself feel confident and optimistic about the future. Adopt a positive mental attitude; feel good about yourself and you will feel good about other people and life.

? Minimize stress in your life. Most stress is due to change, so it pays to subject ourselves to as few changes as possible. Live a systematic life in harmony with the rhythms of nature. People who live long usually rise and retire at the same time and have an orderly, somewhat routine, life. However, whenever physical changes are necessary, greet them with a flexible, accepting attitude.

? Eliminate harmful mental attitudes; turn to the good thoughts of life and forget the bad. Fear, anxiety, and worry are deadly killers that make it easier to get all kinds of disease and effectively destroy the quality of life we might have. The opposite of fear and worry is faith and trust. Take time to develop a belief in yourself, in life, and in the fellow travelers that come your way. People with an honest faith are not cheated anywhere near as often as those who are afraid. An ancient homily says: “The things we fear are sure to come to pass.”

Anger, bitterness, hostility, and resentment will drive happiness from our life and leave us with a profound depression. The opposite of anger and resentment is love and forgiveness. Start by forgiving, now and forevermore, anyone you believe may have caused you harm of any kind. Refuse to have any part of being unforgiving. People who are hostile have cardiovascular disease five times more often than those who are loving. So treat yourself to happiness and adopt a loving attitude. Don’t try to compete with other people. Keeping up with the Joneses is a continual drain on our emotions and energy. Compete only with your own excellence. Learn to excel at something, then attempt to beat your own best perfor-mance. And be willing to share your expertise with others. Nobody can win unless we all win.

? Lead a fun life; laugh a lot. Investigations by Norman Cousins and others have demonstrated the therapeutic benefits of fun and laughter in promoting health and long life. Few long-livers take themselves too seriously. They laugh often at themselves and their mistakes. They maintain a youthful enthusiasm for anything new and different. And they possess an almost childlike enthusiasm for spontaneous fun and play.

? Be a loving, generous person. Researchers who have observed groups of longevous people report that virtually every long-liver is generous, kind, loving, and unselfish. Dr. Solomonovich, a Russian gerontologist who spent long periods living in close proximity with the long-lived Abkhasian people in the Caucuses, reported that he had never heard any long-lived person use a harsh word.

To be a loving person means that we accept other people the way they are without criticizing or judging them or trying to manipulate or change them. To achieve this level of unconditional love we must first let go of any artificiality or pretension, which so often separates us from others. This liberates us to tell the exact truth at all times and to reveal our deepest inner feelings. Through revealing our innermost feelings we immediately become closer to others. Loving people are emotionally transparent, with nothing to hide.

? Avoid living alone. People live healthier and longer lives in the presence of close and loving relationships. Studies from around the world show that loneliness is a major threat to health and long life. Virtually every gerontologist agrees that we can extend life significantly by creating a compatible and stable marriage with accompanying family life, and by cultivating many friends and being active in a number of social organizations.

? Maintain monogamous sexual activity regularly through life. Regular sexual activity with one permanent partner has been estimated to extend life expectancy by at least two years. Almost all healthy long-lived people stay married and enjoy regular lovemaking until the end of their days. Those who are unable to have sex past 50 usually are not well or are engaging in anti-health habits.

? Keep growing. Long-lived people are an independent and adventuresome lot who are not afraid to take an occasional prudent risk to succeed. But they see no reason to endanger their lives and health by exposing themselves to unnecessary risks. We become old on the day we stop growing and we stop growing on the day we become unwilling to take a prudent risk. People stop growing by dropping out of the mainstream of life, thoughts, and ideas, and by seeking safety in the status quo. Numerous studies have shown that ceasing to grow is synonymous with physical atrophy and mental withdrawal.

? Stay mentally active throughout life. A series of studies show that an active mind is man’s greatest resource against aging. People live longer when they use their intelligence and education to acquire and practice wisdom. At all socioeconomic levels, intelligent people tend to use their minds actively and constantly all their lives. Although the mind ages more slowly than any other organ, without constant use it can atrophy and our memory can begin to lapse.

? Believe in and rely on a higher power. Investigations are showing that all forms of spiritual belief and faith exert a powerful benefit on health and long life. In a study of 1,000 long-lived Americans, the Committee for an Extended Life-span found that almost without exception, every single longevous person has strong spiritual beliefs. The same study found that over 50% of all long-livers turn their problems over to a higher power and they rely on this same power to guide them toward the best possible solution. While their faith safeguards them from stress, they are able to relax and enjoy living.

? Continue to work at a satisfying job for as long as possible. When the National Institute of Health made an 11-year investigation of 600 possible variables that contribute to longevity, they found that the degree to which a person derives satisfaction from his or her job is the greatest single factor affecting longevity. Work makes us who and what we are. Work is life and life is work. To not work can be totally destructive. No one can live healthfully knowing their talents are not needed. Many people who retire at the age of 65, die within a few months unless they are able to pick up some meaningful hobbies, or volunteer work, or change occupations.

Scientists who have studied work response at all levels have concluded that only by working at a job with the following qualities can we expect to enjoy optimum health and long life.

o We should be free to make all or most of our own decisions. We should be under no one’s authority or supervision. The closer we are to being our own boss, the better.

o The job should make maximum use of our abilities, skills, and talents. An underutilized person is invariably frustrated.

o The job should allow us to reach a position of eminence in our chosen field. We should be able to rise through promotion to a position of authority and responsibility.

o We should be able to work at our own pace free of all deadlines and pressures.

o Successful work leaves no stress scars. Enjoyable and satisfying work cannot be distinguished from play.

o The job should allow us to do our very best work and to take pride in the work we do. It should encourage us to reach out for high achievement by being ready to tackle challenging new tasks that we have never done before and that, in the process, provide a feeling of success and accomplishment.

o We should be able to continue to work without any pressure to retire for as long as we wish.

There may be a hundred more life-extenders, but the above are sufficient to give us an idea of what it takes to live to be 100. In fact, the secret to longevity can be wrapped up in “living the good life.” Happiness and longevity are a choice. If we choose to live well and live happy, we have chosen to live long.

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