

Top 20 ways to live longer

How to increase your life expectancy

Life expectancy for both men and women has continued to rise. To ensure that you are one of those living longer we have prepared a list of 20 great tips to increase your life expectancy.

1. TIP 1: Laugh more

Research states that laughter may be beneficial to health. Laughing appears to boost the blood flow (by more than 20 per cent) and researchers say it may reduce the risk of developing heart disease. Laughing has previously been found to help fight infections, relieve hay fever, ease pain and help control diabetes. The positive effect of laughing is thought to last around 30 to 45 minutes.

2. TIP 2: Adjust sleeping time

Life expectancy may be reduced by sleeping more than eight hours a night. A study found that people who get only six to seven hours sleep a night live longer than those who sleep eight hours or more, or less than four hours.

3. TIP 3: Eat more garlic

Garlic has been referred to as 'nature's antibiotic'. It is a powerful cleanser of the body and regular ingestion promotes a healthy heart and circulation by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. It also helps fight infection and can boost immunity. There is strong evidence to suggest that garlic helps with the prevention of cancers of the digestive system, including the oesophagus, stomach, colon and rectum. Those

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who don't like the taste of garlic should try the odourless supplements that are available.

4. TIP 4: Boost your sex life

Having sex between three to four times a week is thought to reduce the risk of having a heart attack or stroke in half. During sex, the average person maintains their heart rate above 70 per cent of the maximum, making sex a wonderful CV workout! Sex reduces stress, leads to greater contentment and better sleep.

5. TIP 5: Drink tea

Many research studies support the view that tea is good for your health. Scientists tend to agree that tea (both black and green) may contribute positively to the promotion of health and the prevention of chronic disease. Recent research studies reveal the antioxidants in tea may inhibit the growth of cancer cells, support dental health, increase bone density and strengthen cardiovascular health. According to a study published in *Circulation: The Journal of the American Heart Association*, heart attack patients who were tea drinkers decreased their risk of death by up to 44 per cent, as compared to non-tea drinkers.

6. TIP 6: Drink red wine

Any excuse to drink more has got to be good! Recent studies show that drinking around one glass of red wine a day may have certain health benefits by protecting against certain cancers and heart disease, and can have a positive effect on cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Excessive or binge drinking, however, unfortunately doesn't produce the same benefits.

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7. TIP 7: Regular self examination

For women this means regularly examining their breasts, and while breast cancer is not unknown among men, males should regularly check their testicles for lumps. It is important to get to know how your body parts normally feel and look, and report any changes, such as a lump, to your doctor. More often than not, lumps prove to be benign, and these types of cancer are usually curable if they're caught early enough.

8. TIP 8: Have regular smears/prostate tests

Women will usually be called once every three years for a smear test, and should make sure they attend when requested. Cervical screening probably prevents thousands of deaths each year. Prostate cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in men and is second only to lung cancer as the biggest cancer killer. There are varying viewpoints about how often men should have a test and at what age. Testing should start at the age of 50, or at the age of 40 if in high-risk groups, such as black men or those with a father, brother or son with the disease. However, if you have any concerns go and visit your doctor.

9. TIP 9: Monitor your bowel habits

Any dramatic change in bowel habits such as an increase in constipation, or passing blood should be referred to a doctor immediately. It could prove be something as simple as piles (haemorrhoids), or worse case scenario could be bowel cancer, which is important to discover as early as possible.

10. TIP 10: Drink more water

Most people are unaware that the recommendation is that the average person should drink around eight glasses of water a day. The human

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body is made up of between 55 and 75 per cent water, and is in need of constant water replenishment. An increased intake of water will greatly enhance digestion, nutrient absorption, skin hydration, detoxification and virtually every aspect of better health.

11. TIP 11: Get more friends

Research suggests that friends help people live longer. Research in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health says that socialising with friends is beneficial. Good friends will promise to be there for you, and their presence can actually help you live longer, researchers say. Australian scientists said having friends around in old age can do more for life expectancy than having family members around, and that friends may encourage people to look after their health, and help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety at difficult times.

12. TIP 12: No smoking

Everyone is aware of the potential catastrophic effect of smoking. It is better not to start at all, but the sooner a smoker quits, the better. Because the damage caused by smoking is cumulative, the longer a person smokes the greater the risk of developing a smoking-related disease, such as lung cancer or heart disease. Quitting smoking not only saves money, but also has added health benefits. Within one year after quitting, the risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker, and within 10 years, the risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker.

13. TIP 13: Relax

Relaxation reduces blood pressure and helps reduce stress-related conditions such as depression. A relaxation technique such as yoga or meditation can help reduce stress levels.

14. TIP 14: Get a pet

Owning a pet has a surprising amount of health benefits for the owner, according to a series of studies. Ownership of a pet, particularly a dog, means people are more active. Animals are known to reduce anxiety both from the actual physical comfort from stroking them, but also because they are a distraction and something pleasant to focus on. They are also good friends to many and provide a source of amusement, making us laugh.

15. TIP 15: Exercise more

Exercise is known to reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes and obesity. It keeps joints, tendons and ligaments flexible, and contributes to mental well-being by helping treat depression, relieve stress and anxiety. Exercise also aids better sleep. Even if you are pushed for time, exercise could be gained simply by walking up stairs rather than taking the elevator, or even try walking or cycling on shorter journeys rather than taking the car.

16. TIP 16: Eat more fruit and vegetables

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help ward off heart disease and stroke, control blood pressure and cholesterol, and prevent some types of cancer. It is recommended to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

17. TIP 17: Change job

Research suggests a strong relationship between how long people live and the nature of their jobs. According to UK Government statistics, for the period 1997-99, life expectancy at birth in England and Wales for males in the professional group was 7.4 years more than that for those in the unskilled manual groups. The gap between the social classes was smaller for women than for men, at 5.7 years.

18. TIP 18: Have a happy marriage

Married people tend to have better health than unmarried people. For instance, married individuals tend to be able to have lower rates of alcoholism than their unmarried counterparts because they tend to offer encouragement, support, and protection from daily problems. They are also more able to handle stress better as a result. However, studies suggest that divorcing then remarrying actually increases the risk of dying prematurely.

19. TIP 19: Be optimistic

People with a positive outlook on life can actually live longer. Researchers found that optimistic people decreased their risk of early death by 50 per cent compared with those who leaned more towards pessimism.

20. TIP 20: Eat chocolate

Chocolate contains flavanoids and antioxidants which have positive health benefits. Flavanoids aid cardiovascular health, while antioxidants are believed to prevent or delay certain damage to the body's cells and tissues. Dark chocolate is considered best as it contains more than twice as many antioxidants as a bar of milk chocolate, and has fewer calories.

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