

13 Habits Linked to a Long Life (Backed by Science)

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Many people think that life expectancy is largely determined by genetics.

However, genes play a much smaller role than originally believed. It turns out that environmental factors like diet and lifestyle are key.

Here are 13 habits linked to a long life.

1. Avoid overeating

The link between [calorie intake](#) and longevity currently generates a lot of interest.

Animal studies suggest that a 10–50% reduction in normal calorie intake may increase maximum lifespan ([1](#)

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Studies of human populations renowned for longevity also observe links between low calorie intake, an extended lifespan, and a lower likelihood of disease ([2](#)

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What's more, calorie restriction may help reduce excess body weight and [belly fat](#), both of which are associated with shorter lifespans ([5](#)

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That said, long-term calorie restriction is often unsustainable and can include negative side effects, such as increased hunger, low body temperature, and a diminished sex drive (3

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Whether calorie restriction slows aging or extends your lifespan is not yet fully understood.

SUMMARY

Limiting your calories may help you live longer and protect against disease. However, more human research is needed.

2. Eat more nuts

Nuts are nutritional powerhouses.

They're rich in protein, fiber, antioxidants, and beneficial plant compounds. What's more, they're a great source of several vitamins and minerals, such as copper, [magnesium](#), potassium, folate, niacin, and vitamins B6 and E ([8](#)

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Several studies show that nuts have beneficial effects on heart disease, high blood pressure, inflammation, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, belly fat levels, and even some forms of cancer ([9](#)

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One study found that people who consumed at least 3 servings of nuts per week had a 39% lower risk of premature death (13

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Similarly, two recent reviews including over 350,000 people noted that those who ate nuts had a 4–27% lower risk of dying during the study period — with the greatest reductions seen in those who ate 1 serving of nuts per day (14

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SUMMARY

Adding some nuts to your daily routine may keep you healthy and help you live longer.

3. Try out turmeric

When it comes to anti-aging strategies, [turmeric](#) is a great option. That's because this spice contains a potent bioactive compound called curcumin.

Due to its antioxidant and [anti-inflammatory](#) properties, curcumin is thought to help maintain brain, heart, and lung function, as well as protect against cancers and age-related diseases ([16](#)

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Curcumin is linked to an increased lifespan in both insects and mice (23

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However, these findings have not always been replicated, and no human studies are currently available (26

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Nevertheless, turmeric has been consumed for thousands of years in India and is generally considered safe.

SUMMARY

Curcumin, the main bioactive compound in turmeric, has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Some animal studies suggest that it can increase lifespan.

ADVERTISING

4. Eat plenty of healthy plant foods

Consuming a wide variety of plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and [beans](#), may decrease disease risk and promote longevity.

For example, many studies link a plant-rich diet to a lower risk of premature death, as well as a reduced risk of

cancer, metabolic syndrome, heart disease, depression, and brain deterioration (28

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These effects are attributed to plant foods' nutrients and antioxidants, which include polyphenols, carotenoids, folate, and vitamin C (32

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Accordingly, several studies link vegetarian and vegan diets, which are naturally higher in plant foods, to a 12–15% lower risk of premature death (33

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The same studies also report a 29–52% lower risk of dying from cancer or heart, kidney, or hormone-related diseases (33

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What's more, some research suggests that the risk of premature death and certain diseases increases with greater meat consumption (35

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However, other studies report either nonexistent or much weaker links — with the negative effects seeming specifically linked to [processed meat](#) (38

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Vegetarians and vegans also generally tend to be more health-conscious than meat eaters, which could at least partly explain these findings.

Overall, eating plenty of plant foods is likely to benefit health and longevity.

SUMMARY

Eating plenty of plant foods is likely to help you live longer and lower your risk of various common diseases.

5. Stay physically active

It should come as no surprise that staying physically active can keep you healthy and add years to your life (40

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As few as 15 minutes of **exercise** per day may help you achieve benefits, which could include an additional 3 years of life (41

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Furthermore, your risk of premature death may decrease by 4% for each additional 15 minutes of daily physical activity (41

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A recent review observed a 22% lower risk of early death in individuals who exercised — even though they worked out less than the recommended 150 minutes per week (42

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People who hit the 150-minute recommendation were 28% less likely to die early. What's more, that number was 35% for those who exercised beyond this guidance (42

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Finally, some research links vigorous activity to a 5% greater reduction in risk compared to low- or moderate-intensity activities (43

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SUMMARY

Regular physical activity can extend your lifespan. Exercising more than 150 minutes per week is best, but even small amounts can help.

6. Don't smoke

Smoking is strongly linked to disease and early death (44

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Overall, people who smoke may lose up to 10 years of life and be 3 times more likely to die prematurely than those who never pick up a cigarette (45

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Keep in mind that it's never too late to quit.

One study reports that individuals who quit smoking by age 35 may prolong their lives by up to 8.5 years (46

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Furthermore, quitting smoking in your 60s may add up to 3.7 years to your life. In fact, quitting in your 80s may still provide benefits (44

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SUMMARY

Stopping smoking can significantly prolong your life — and it's never too late to quit.

7. Moderate your alcohol intake

Heavy [alcohol consumption](#) is linked to liver, heart, and pancreatic disease, as well as an overall increased risk of early death ([47](#)

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However, moderate consumption is associated with a reduced likelihood of several diseases, as well as a 17–18% decrease in your risk of premature death ([47](#)

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Wine is considered particularly beneficial due to its high content of polyphenol antioxidants.

Results from a 29-year study showed that men who preferred wine were 34% less likely to die early than those who preferred beer or spirits (49

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In addition, one review observed wine to be especially protective against heart disease, diabetes, neurological disorders, and metabolic syndrome (50

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To keep consumption moderate, it is recommended that women aim for 1–2 units or less per day and a maximum of 7 per week. Men should keep their daily intake to less than 3 units, with a maximum of 14 per week (51

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It's important to note that no strong research indicates that the benefits of moderate drinking are greater than those of abstaining from alcohol.

In other words, there is no need to start drinking if you don't usually consume alcohol.

SUMMARY

If you drink alcohol, maintaining a moderate intake may help prevent disease and prolong your life. Wine may be particularly beneficial.

8. Prioritize your happiness

Feeling happy can significantly increase your longevity (52).

In fact, happier individuals had a 3.7% reduction in early death over a 5-year study period (53

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A study of 180 Catholic nuns analyzed their self-reported levels of happiness when they first entered the monastery and later compared these levels to their longevity.

Those who felt happiest at 22 years of age were 2.5 times more likely to still be alive six decades later (54

[Trusted Source](#)

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Finally, a review of 35 studies showed that happy people may live up to 18% longer than their less happy counterparts (55

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SUMMARY

Happiness likely has positive effects not only for your mood but also your lifespan.

9. Avoid chronic stress and anxiety

Anxiety and stress may significantly decrease your lifespan.

For instance, women suffering from stress or anxiety are reportedly up to two times more likely to die from heart disease, stroke, or lung cancer (56

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Similarly, the risk of premature death is up to three times higher for anxious or stressed men compared to their more relaxed counterparts (59, 60

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If you're [feeling stressed](#), laughter and optimism could be two key components of the solution.

Studies show that pessimistic individuals have a 42% higher risk of early death than more optimistic people. However, both laughter and a positive outlook on life can reduce stress, potentially prolonging your life ([62](#)

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SUMMARY

Finding ways to reduce your anxiety and stress levels can extend your lifespan. Maintaining an optimistic outlook on life can be beneficial, too.

10. Nurture your social circle

Researchers report that maintaining healthy social networks can help you live up to 50% longer (66

[Trusted Source](#)

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In fact, having just 3 social ties may decrease your risk of early death by more than 200% (67

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Studies also link healthy social networks to positive changes in heart, brain, hormonal, and immune function, which may decrease your risk of chronic diseases (68

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A strong social circle might also help you react less negatively to stress, perhaps further explaining the positive effect on lifespan (73

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Finally, one study reports that providing support to others may be more beneficial than receiving it. In addition to accepting care from your friends and family, make sure to return the favor (75

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SUMMARY

Nurturing close relationships may result in decreased stress levels, improved immunity, and an extended lifespan.

11. Be more conscientious

Conscientiousness refers to a person's ability to be self-disciplined, organized, efficient, and goal-oriented.

Based on data from a study that followed 1,500 boys and girls into old age, kids who were considered persistent, organized, and disciplined lived 11% longer than their less conscientious counterparts (76

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Conscientious people may also have lower blood pressure and fewer psychiatric conditions, as well as a lower risk of diabetes and heart or joint problems (78

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This might be partly because conscientious individuals are less likely to take dangerous risks or react negatively to stress — and more likely to lead successful professional lives or be responsible about their health (79

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Conscientiousness can be developed at any stage in life through steps as small as tidying up a desk, sticking to a work plan, or being on time.

SUMMARY

Being conscientious is associated with a longer lifespan and fewer health problems in old age.

12. Drink coffee or tea

Both coffee and tea are linked to a decreased risk of chronic disease.

For instance, the polyphenols and catechins found in [green tea](#) may decrease your risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease ([82](#)

[Trusted Source](#)
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Similarly, coffee is linked to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers and brain ailments, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's (87, 88, 89

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Additionally, both coffee and tea drinkers benefit from a 20–30% lower risk of early death compared to non-drinkers (93

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Just remember that too much caffeine can also lead to anxiety and insomnia, so you may want to curb your intake

to the recommended limit of 400 mg per day — around 4 cups of coffee (97

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It's also worth noting that it generally takes six hours for caffeine's effects to subside. Therefore, if you have trouble getting enough high-quality sleep, you may want to shift your intake to earlier in the day.

SUMMARY

Moderate consumption of tea and coffee may benefit healthy aging and longevity.

13. Develop a good sleeping pattern

Sleep is crucial for regulating cell function and helping your body heal.

A recent study reports that longevity is likely linked to regular sleeping patterns, such as going to bed and waking up around the same time each day (99

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Sleep duration also seems to be a factor, with both too little and too much being harmful.

For instance, sleeping less than 5–7 hours per night is linked to a 12% greater risk of early death, while sleeping more than 8–9 hours per night could also decrease your lifespan by up to 38% (100

[Trusted Source](#)

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Too little sleep may also promote inflammation and increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and [obesity](#). These are all linked to a shortened lifespan (102

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On the other hand, excessive sleep could be linked to depression, low physical activity, and undiagnosed health conditions, all of which may negatively affect your lifespan (106

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SUMMARY

Developing a sleep routine that includes 7–8 hours of sleep each night may help you live longer.