

Aging well means attention to diet, exercise and stress

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This time of year is all about aging — the decaying leaves of fall, released from the trees in their brilliant flame of color; the turn of seasons from summer to winter. It's the cycle of life, which we all must accept.

Once the sands of time start to fall, the cascade is perpetual.

As long as humans have been alive, defying age has been a topic of great interest. With the technology available today, new frontiers of age-related medicine are being pioneered — with some surprising findings.

Aging is a biological process that involves all bodily systems. Tendons and ligaments lose elasticity. Balance goes; we begin to stumble. Memory and brain activity fades. Metabolism slows. Hormones which once surged begin to trickle. The reason behind all these maladies has baffled scientists and the medical field as long as time.

Although everyone is slowly marching toward the same fate, there is inspiring

new science that proves there is a lot that one can do to increase the length of their healthy years. Health is a cumulative snapshot of many dimensions of one's lifestyle, which integrate into a person's being. Our behavior can predict around 80 percent of our health outcomes; the remaining 20 percent is genetically influenced. Genetics may be the reason why it is not uncommon to hear the argument about the 105-year-old who has smoked for their entire life and eaten sugar-laden pastry for breakfast while still enjoying a happy life.

It is not genes exclusively that determine aging — rather that their influence on other biomarkers determine longevity. Genes for cholesterol control, glucose tolerance, the acuity of our mentality, or even the size of a person all affect aging. Now scientists are beginning to understand the human genome. This will change medicine at a gene level because it will be possible to produce gene inhibitors which will work to combat negative effects. An example is the CEPT inhibitor which

can raise the good cholesterol. This inhibitor, is present in 1/4 people over 100 years old, while only 1 in 12 under 65 possess it.

The next interesting point of data is the influence of daily activity. It is no surprise that many of the world's oldest people have lived an active lifestyle. One of the oldest people ever to be documented legitimately, a 122-year-old French woman, rode a bicycle every day until she was 100. Activity does not mean a dedicated triathlon training program; consistency at the moderate level is the most beneficial. If a person can increase their daily activity, outside of structured exercise, it can have a bigger effect than a sedentary lifestyle with higher intensity exercise a few times a week.

Care for muscle health, joint range-of-motion, and cardiovascular ability are all important to consider as part of an effective anti-aging regimen. Sarcopenia is a condition which is the second leading cause for death of senior citizens. Sarcopenia is muscle wasting, which happens in a rapid decline after

50 years. Basically the muscle cells begin to waste away or become infused with fat (like marbling in steak). This, however, is easy to avoid. Resistance training is very effective — so much in fact, that a person can march into their 80s with the musculature of someone many decades younger.

Diet is a tricky subject, and with so many "experts" recommending one thing or another it can be quite confusing. Any time a diet is trademarked, has a cult-like following, or makes outstanding health claims, there is cause to be wary. The cross-sectional data of many popular diet plans illustrate the fact that people become aware of what they're eating, this awareness brings to lower consumption. One common thread emerges: eat more vegetables, less processed snacks, and reduce added sugars.

Another problem with growing old is our bodies' ability to handle stress. Leading research in aging has found that chronic inflammation is a key factor to aging. Inflammation is the body's reaction to stresses; they can

cause a variety of illness and conditions, and as someone ages, their body seems to accumulate more and more of this effect. It's unknown why, but the cells are less resistant to fighting it off.

Combating the inflammation can be effective for longevity. Certain spices have proven to be beneficial — cumin, tumeric, and ginger, to name a few. Proper exercise, a healthy stress relationship, and proper rest are other therapies.

With 4 of 5 people over the age of 65 currently taking medicine for blood pressure, cholesterol, and/or diabetes, it is no wonder that the aging populace is straddling the fine line of sickness and health.

Aging is inevitable. Once it is better understood one is armed with the tools to continue living vibrantly well beyond the average.

Eat mainly plants and vegetables, but not too much. Exercise in a structured manner, including resistance training, but also get plenty of non-exercise activity. Reduce stress, sleep well, and find ways to seek out joy in life! You will age well.



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