

Living to 100 and Beyond

At the beginning of the 20th century, the average life expectancy at birth in the United States was just under 50 years. Today, the average newborn can expect to reach 80 years. This great leap forward has little or nothing to do with genes, and everything to do with advances in public health and healthy lifestyles.

Genes have a relatively small influence on longevity, accounting for only 20% to 25% of the reasons that you make it to that age. Not smoking, eating healthfully, getting plenty of exercise, and limiting alcohol matter the most.

You have the power to change many things that influence your health and how long you live.

Here are 10 steps that will help you have a long, healthy life:

- 1) Don't smoke.
- 2) Be physically active every day.
- 3) Eat a healthy diet rich in whole grains, lean protein, vegetables, and fruits. Reduce or avoid unhealthy saturated fats and trans fats. Instead, use healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.
- 4) Be sure to get enough vitamin D and calcium.
- 5) Maintain a healthy weight and body shape.
- 6) Challenge your mind.
- 7) Build a strong social network.
- 8) Protect your sight, spine/nervous system, hearing and general health by following preventive care guidelines.
- 9) Floss, brush, and see a dentist regularly.
- 10) Discuss with your doctor whether you need any supplements to help bridge any gaps in nutrition.

