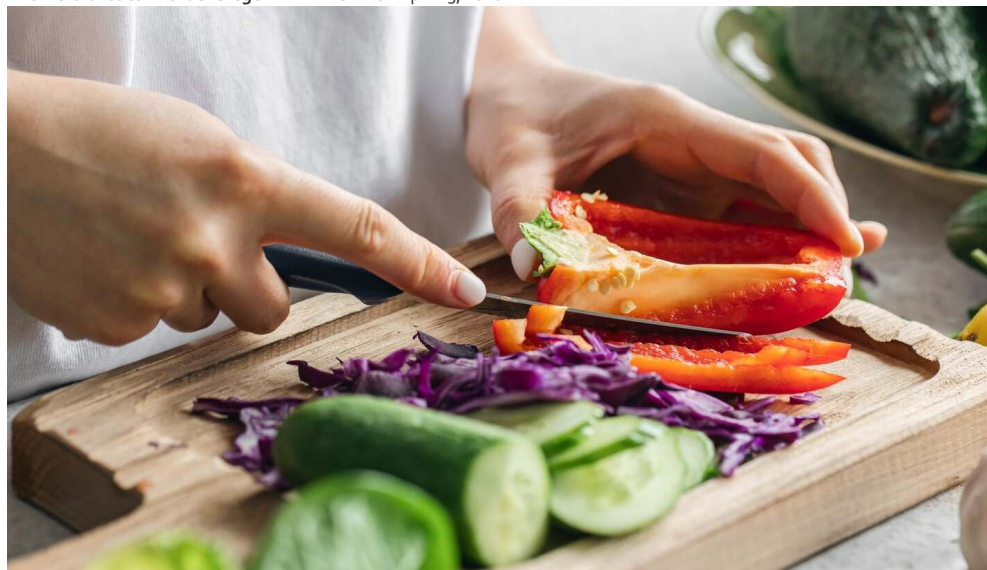




How to Boost Your Life Expectancy

With reference to Michael Greger M.D. FACLM on April 23, 2026



A healthy lifestyle could substantially reduce premature mortality and increase life expectancy.

What can physicians do to promote healthy, life-extending lifestyle changes?

A pivotal paper published in Europe more than a decade ago entitled “Healthy Living Is the Best Revenge” found that practicing just four simple, healthy lifestyle factors compared to none could potentially have a strong impact on preventing chronic diseases. We’re talking nearly 80% less chronic disease risk, slashing diabetes risk by 93%, dropping heart attack risk by 81%, and cutting stroke risk in half and cancer risk by 36%. Think about what that means. The potential for preventing disease and death is enormous. In the United States alone every year, there are a half million first heart attacks, a half million first strokes, a million new cases of diabetes, and a million new cancer diagnoses. The message is clear: Practicing a few healthy behaviors can have a huge impact.

What are those four fabled factors?

- never smoking
- not being obese
- averaging about a half hour of exercise a day
- following healthful dietary principles, including a lot of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and less meat.

Follow those four simple rules and boom! Enjoy nearly 80% reduced risk of major chronic diseases.

What does that mean for mortality risk? A similar combination of four healthy behaviors predicted “a 4-fold difference in total mortality in men and women, with an estimated impact equivalent to 14 years in chronological age,” meaning the individuals were dying at such a reduced rate that it was as if they were 14 years younger. “Finally, a Regimen to Extend Human Life Expectancy,” proclaimed a commentary in reference to a study that had made a similar analysis of the impact of healthy lifestyle behaviors on life expectancies. But this time, it looked directly at the U.S. population, which is particularly important, since Americans have a shorter life expectancy compared to people living in nearly all other higher-income countries. The researchers concluded that a

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Peeling Back the Onion Claims

nutritionfacts.org April 28, 2026

The outermost layers of onions contain the highest concentration of antioxidants, but they are often discarded. Red onions have the most antioxidant activity, followed by yellow and then white onions. Many health-related claims about onions are based on animal studies, particularly involving rats. Human studies testing onions' effects on osteoporosis, allergies, and cancer-related liver damage generally found no significant clinical improvements.

One trial found that consuming a whole onion daily improved blood sugar levels and insulin sensitivity in breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, compared to a lower onion dose.

Prunes: Nature's Answer to Constipation

nutritionfacts.org March 26, 2026

Constipation is widespread and often overlooked. In the United States, constipation accounts for three million doctor visits every year and 800,000 emergency room visits. Depending on how you define it, up to 80% of the population may be suffering from constipation.

About eight prunes a day with water significantly improved stool frequency and consistency, performing better than fiber supplements like psyllium (sold as Metamucil).

Glycidol: The DNA-Damager in Fried Foods

nutritionfacts.org July 3, 2025

Refining vegetable oils creates harmful by-products such as 3-MCPD and, even worse, glycidol, a genotoxic carcinogen that can directly damage DNA and has no known safe intake level.

Fried food consumption is linked to negative health outcomes, particularly increased cardiovascular mortality; some evidence also suggests a higher prostate cancer risk in men who frequently eat fried foods.



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healthy lifestyle could substantially reduce premature mortality and increase life expectancy in U.S. adults. Okay, but by how much? They estimated that adhering to a low-risk lifestyle could extend life expectancy at age 50 by 14 years in women and 12.2 years in men. So, if you're 50 right now, instead of only living to 79 if you're a woman and 75½ if you're a man in the United States, taking even just basic care of yourself could propel you to an average life expectancy of 93 if you're a woman and 87½ if you're a man.

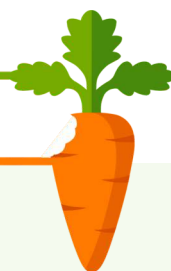
The bottom line is it's never too late to turn back the clock. A midlife switch just to the basics—at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables, walking 20 minutes a day, not smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight—leads to a substantial reduction in mortality even in the following few years. We're talking a 40% lower risk of dying in the subsequent four years. Indeed, "making the necessary changes to adhere to a healthy lifestyle is extremely worthwhile, and...middle-age is not too late to act."

It's reasonable to assume that not being a hypocrite and trying to walk the walk would lead to positive consequences, inspiring confidence in others. Don't you want a dance instructor who can dance, a music teacher who can play, and a health professional who's healthy? But "this simple intuition fails to take into account the concerns about devaluation than an expert's superior behavior elicits in others"—that is, that may make people feel inadequate. For example, you know how vegetarians often become targets of ridicule and hostility? That's because they may come off as morally superior and make other people feel like they're being looked down upon.

There was an elegant demonstration of this phenomenon in a study where "principled deviants who take the high road threaten others' moral self-worth." Participants were asked to complete "a racist task," and those "moral rebels" who refused to do so were cheered on by observers but disparaged by their fellow participants who had done the task. Why? Because the rebels' stance was "an implied indictment of their spinelessness." Isn't that interesting?

So, when doctors portray themselves as "the picture of health," patients might feel they're being judged, which can alienate those who need help the most. Someone with a weight issue, for example, might feel threatened by a physician triathlete. But what are we supposed to do? Practitioners and physicians who smoke are less likely to tell patients to quit, those who are overweight are less likely to advise on weight loss, and those who don't exercise are less likely to discuss it. The solution is for doctors to emphasize that their role is to help patients meet their own personal health goals. Studies show this approach increases the appeal of fitness-focused physicians to overweight patients — allowing doctors to model healthy behavior without alienating those who would benefit most from their guidance.

Date Syrup



Ingredients:

- 1 c pitted dates
- 1 ¼ c boiling water, plus more as needed
- 1 t fresh lemon juice

Method:

In a heatproof bowl, **combine** the dates and water, then **set aside** for 1 hour to allow the dates to soften. **Transfer** the dates and the soaking water to a high-powered blender. **Add** the lemon juice and **process** until smooth. If the mixture is too thick, **add** more water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until it reaches the desired consistency.

Transfer to a glass jar or other container with air tight lid. **Store** the syrup in the refrigerator, can last for 2 to 3 weeks.



This recipe pairs well with: breakfast foods (pancakes, oat-meal, etc), dessert topping, and savory dishes (roasted vegetables).