

43 Ways to Live Forever, Almost.

BY: JODI WELLMAN

Who isn't angling for a few more years above ground? While Anatole France said, "The average man does not know what to do with this life, yet wants another one which will last forever", let's skip the judgment about how we're living our lives (for now) and just focus on "proven" ways to stuff more years into the lives we've got. (We'll talk about the way we spend those years at a later juncture, to be sure.)

The science is real, friends, and I'm here today to manipulate it to my advantage to make a point that extending our lives is something we actually can control... in a world that's wildly but beautifully uncontrollable.

Because you want to live to see another day, read on. And snack on some nuts while you're doing it.

1 Be born female.

Males make it to an average of 76.1, and females die on average 5 years later at 81.1.

2 Be born at the right time, and ideally in Japan.

Being born in the U.S. in 2019 means you'll have a life expectancy of 78.5 years. If you happen to have been born in a different, more "mature" generation, your death clock is ticking. Baby Boomers will make it to 69.7, Gen Xers will live to 71.1, and Millennials will live on average to 74.6... almost 9 years more than their grandparents.

Being born in Japan would statistically let you live 6 years longer (until 84.1).

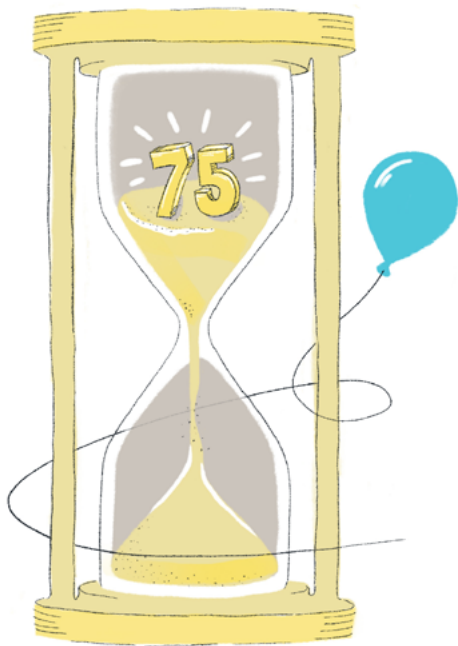
3 Inherit better genes.

Genetics account for about 20 – 30% of your chance of surviving to age 85. (Good luck with that one.)

Speaking of your parents, keep them alive. Your risk of death is 17% lower for each decade that at least one of your parents lives beyond the age of 70 years, and if you're a female and both your parents maintain their health to age 90, you're 38% more likely to do the same.

4 Be on the short side.

You'll live 2 years longer than a tall man if you grow up to be a short man; several studies find a 0.5 year per centimeter reduction in longevity.



5 Just get to 75.

If you make it to your 75th birthday you've passed some kind of grim reaper hurdle; your life expectancy increases by another 3.4 years.



6 Get hitched.

Being (and staying) married is associated with longer survival. The surviving spouses have a 39% greater risk of death, and people who are divorced or separated have a 27% greater chance of dying than people who are currently married.

Even if your spouse dies an untimely death or divorces you, it's not as bad as the "never married penalty" that researchers say you'll suffer from if you opt out of matrimonial bliss. Never married people are far likelier to die than widows or divorcées.

7 Make people.

Having kids lowers your death risk; if you have at least one child, you can expect to live 2 years longer if you're a man and 1.5 years longer if you're a woman.

And ladies... if you have your last child after the age of 33, you'll have twice the odds of living to 95 years or beyond compared with women who had their last child by age 29. Women who gave birth to a child while older than 40 were four times more likely to live to 100 than women who had their last child at a younger age.



8 Speaking of reproductive efforts...

Compared with men who had had sex just once a month, those who reported having it twice a week had only **half** the death rate. (Sorry, no stats about the ladies).

9 Age is more than just a number.

If you're a woman and you marry a partner 7 – 9 years younger than you, you'll *increase* your mortality risk by **20%**. If you're a man and you marry a partner 7 – 9 years younger, you'll *reduce* your mortality by **11%**. It's not a typo.

10 Get smart.

If you're better educated at 25, you can expect to live to 82 – compared to less educated people who can expect to live **7 fewer years**.

If you happen to have fewer than 12 years of education, your life expectancy will be on par with most adults in the 1950s and 1960s.

11 Become a bookworm.

If you read books you'll live almost **2 years** longer than those who don't care much for the written word.

12 Mo money, mo years.

If you're among the richest American men, you'll live **15 years** longer than the poorest men. If you're in that top 1% of the richest American women, you'll live **10 years** longer than the poorest women. Sad but true.

13 Become a social butterfly.

Maintaining a healthy social network can help you live up to **50%** longer.

If you have just 3 social ties, they say it may decrease your risk of early death by more than **200%**. Maybe don't cancel those plans.

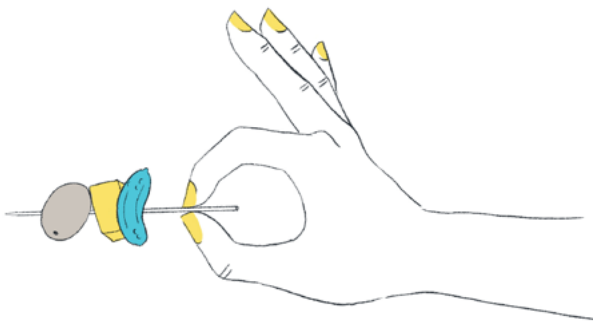
14 Become one of those “healthy lifestyle” people.

If you adopt the healthiest of lifestyles (not smoking, low BMI, physically active, low alcohol intake and a healthy diet) you'll be **82%** less likely to die from cardiovascular disease and **65%** less likely to die from cancer compared with the heathens who live unhealthy lifestyles.

15 Feed your face the right things.

Because you haven't been living under a rock, I'm sure you've heard the recent study confirming that a poor diet leads to **ONE IN FIVE DEATHS** (yes, that's worth of yelling in caps). The study recommends an incorporation of whole grains, nuts, and seeds. What else do we know about diet and death?

- If you consume at least 3 servings of nuts per week, you'll have a 39% lower risk of premature death.
- If you're a man consuming more than 60 g/day of vegetables, you'll live nearly **2 years** longer than men consuming less than 20 g of veggies per day.
- If you're eating a vegetarian or vegan diet, you'll enjoy a 12–15% lower risk of premature death.
- Your high fiber diet will reduce your risk of death by **22%**.
- For every 10% increase in ultraprocessed food you consume, you'll realize a 14% increase in the risk of death. (But I think we can all agree that bacon is worth it.)
- Your coffee and tea drinking habit is bestowing you a 20-30% lower risk of early death compared to non-drinkers.



16 Eat less food.

Eating less could add **5 years** to your life.



17 Cheers!

Drinking alcohol in moderation will offer you a **17–18%** decrease in your risk of premature death, and if you're a man who drinks wine, you'll be **34%** less likely to die early than guys who prefer beer or spirits.

18 Stop the pop.

Drinking sugary soda on a daily basis might reduce your life by **4.6 years**. Even Dr. Pepper isn't worth almost five years.

19 Don't sit around.

If you're a woman who sits for more than six hours a day, you're about **40%** more likely to die than those who sit fewer than three hours per day. If you're a man you're **20%** more likely to die.

20 Take your mind out of motion.

By practicing transcendental meditation, you can reduce your death rate by nearly a **quarter**.

21 Put your body in motion.

Exercise buys you time on earth: your risk of premature death may decrease by **4%** for each additional 15 minutes of daily physical activity.

- Moderately exercising for 150 minutes or more per week will buy you about **4.7 more years** of life compared to people who don't exercise.
- If you exceed the 150 minutes, you'll be **35%** less likely to die early.
- If 150 won't fit into your schedule, even 75 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week will let you live **1.8 years longer**, on average, compared with people who don't work out.
- Lifting weights will reward you with a **46%** lower risk of early death than people who don't strength train.
- Playing tennis will add **9.7 years** to your life; badminton will buy you **6.2 years**; swimming gets you **3.4 more years**; oh, just read the article [here](#) yourself.



22 Find your sleep sweet spot.

If you sleep less than 5 hours a night, you're asking for a **65%** higher death rate compared to those who regularly sleep 6 – 7 hours per night. And if you're averaging more than 8 hours at night, you're inviting a **25%** higher death rate. (You're also increasing your mortality risk by about a third if you take sleeping pills, so just sleep 7 – 8 hours and call it a night.)

23 Curb your enthusiasm for TV.

If you watch 4 or more hours of TV per day, you're nearly **50%** more likely to die from any cause than those who limited their TV consumption to under 2 hours.

Each additional hour of TV watched means you're **11%** more likely to die from any cause.



24 Become a quitter.

If you quit smoking by age 35, it might prolong your life by up to **8.5** years.

Or maybe just don't start smoking in the first place.

25 Make work work.

Working in a professional occupation (like as a doctor, accountant, or engineer) will buy you an extra **8 years** of life if you're a man and **7 years** if you're a woman.

If you have low control over a stressful job, you'll have a **15.4%** increase in the likelihood of death compared to having low control over a low-stress job.

26 Work closer to home.

Those who travel more than 31 miles each way to work have shorter lifespans than those who live closer to their jobs.



27 Flip a coin with your retirement timing.

On one hand, seven years of retirement can reduce the chance of getting a serious disease (like diabetes or heart conditions) by **20%**, and they say that early retirement could decrease the probability that you'll die within 5 years by **2.6** percentage points.

Yet on the other hand, working even one more year beyond retirement age could offer you a **9%** to **11%** lower risk of dying... so take this section with a grain of salt. Do what inspires you.



28 Take your vacation.

If you're taking less than 3 weeks of vacation each year, you're **37%** more likely to die compared to those enjoying three weeks or more of time off.

29 Get happy.

If you join the ranks of happier individuals, you'll benefit from a **3.7%** reduction in early death.

30 Look on the bright side.

Being optimistic means you'll be **55%** less likely to die from any cause and **23%** less likely to die from a heart-related illness as compared to the glass-half-empty people. So, fill up your cup.

31 Become a conscientious, hard-working person.

You'll extend your life by an average of **2 - 3 years** by adopting a self-disciplined, dependable, efficient, and goal-oriented personality; this translates to a **20% - 30%** decreased risk of early death.



32 Get your creative juices flowing.

The more creative you are the more you'll stave off death; in one study, each standard deviation increase in creativity was associated with a **12%** decrease in mortality risk.

33 Find a purpose in your life.

Researchers have shown that not having a purpose in life is **2.43** times likelier to kill you than having a reason to wake up in the morning.

34 Connect to something bigger than yourself.

If you attend a regular religious service, you'll be **55%** less likely to die compared to people who don't frequent a temple, church or mosque.

35 Live among the trees.

If you're a woman living in green areas with lots of plant life and vegetation near your home, you'll have a **12%** lower death rate than women living in concrete jungles.

36 Live where the doctors are.

You'll benefit from a **51.5** day higher life expectancy if you live in an area with more primary care doctors than average, and you'll live an extra **19.2** days if you live around more specialty physicians.

37 Get some sunshine.

With the right amount of sun exposure you can benefit from an extra **7 months** to **2 years** of life.



38 Just floss, will you?

It will add **6.4** years to your life expectancy. Seriously. If you don't floss you'll spike your risk of death by **25% - 29%**. Jeez.

39 Funny or die.

If you're a woman with a strong sense of humor you'll have **48%** less risk of death from all causes; if you're a humorous man you won't shave years off your life but good news! You'll decrease your risk of dying from infection by **74%**. Infections aren't funny.

40 Smile like you mean it.

By smiling a high-wattage smile, you're **half** as likely to die than non-smilers. Familiarize yourself with the smile studies... they're fascinating.



41 Become a pet owner.

Dog ownership appears to be associated with lower risk of cardiovascular disease in single-person households and lower mortality in the general population.

42 Be not afraid of the fact that you're getting older, minute by minute.

If you have a negative attitude toward aging, you'll die more than **7 years** sooner than those with a very positive attitude.



43 In the end, it's all in the stars.

Be born a Cancer, Aries or Virgo, because someone somewhere on the internet says you'll live longer.



Jodi Wellman, founder of Four Thousand Mondays plans to floss her way to the ripe age of 103, like her grandmother.

Don't believe me?

1. [Be born female.](#)

2. [Be born at the right time, and ideally in Japan.](#)
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3. [Inherit better genes.](#)

4. [Be on the short side.](#)

5. [Just get to 75.](#)

6. [Get hitched.](#)

7. [Make people.](#)

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9. [Age is more than just a number.](#)

10. [Get smart.](#)

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11. [Become a bookworm.](#)

12. [Mo money, mo years.](#)

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14. [Become one of those "healthy lifestyle" people.](#)

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17. [Cheers!](#)

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18. [Stop the pop.](#)

19. [Don't sit around.](#)

20. [Take your mind out of motion.](#)

21. [Put your body in motion.](#)

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27. [Flip a coin with your retirement timing.](#)

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