

*Guidelines for Living Long & Well*  
*Compiled by The Downing Clinic (December 2005)*

**LIVING LONG AND WELL** is what we'd all like to do.

Goals are to KEEP or ENHANCE what we have:

- Muscle strength, flexibility, and bone integrity
- Mental acuity, memory, focus and ability to get things done
- Good energy, good health, function and stamina
- Positive thoughts, emotions, actions, intentions
- Meaningful relationships and social ties
- Spiritual ties, peace, love, beauty in your life

And to REVERSE or REDUCE SYMPTOMS from chronic illnesses.

We at The Downing Clinic try to help you make good, informed choices to help the process.

**MODELS OF AGING:**

Medical models of aging show declining health for several decades before death. Chronic disease affects ONE-THIRD of the United States population who are on this downward slope to poor health. Americans commonly are afflicted with such chronic illnesses as:

- Type II diabetes
- hypertension
- heart disease
- GERD
- obesity
- arthritis
- bowel problems
- or dementias

Many of these conditions occur for many years. We get sick and stay sick!

The model of aging we strive for does not assume that to be old is to be ill. Good health is maintained at a very high level through the aging process until just before the final event of death. The period of time with disease is short or nonexistent: days, weeks, months, but certainly not decades. Everyday choices can tip the scale one way or the other.

**70 IS THE NEW 50**

Baby boomers, who are now grandparents, have changed ideas about aging. They are dubbed the youngest older generation ever, and such phrases as, "50 is the new 30" stem from how the boomers are handling this business of moving on in life. They demand vitality, function, productivity, and attractive appearance. They are willing to do what it takes to live long and well.

## **FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH**

People have searched for the secrets to slow the aging process for centuries. Ponce de Leon was looking for the “fountain of youth” when he explored the eastern coast of Florida in 1513.

**THE HUNZA VALLEY IS DUBBED THE VALLEY OF ETERNAL YOUTH.** Located in western Pakistan, the Hunzas have lived in isolation for 2000 years. They developed eating, living, and thinking styles that increase lifespan and reduce illnesses. They have learned to live in peace and harmony without hatred, fear or jealousy. They are a friendly, hospitable, religious people of good disposition. They ascribe to positive thinking, beauty, love, and peace, so their energies may be directed to higher things. They believe that one can change and move toward these goals and that true prosperity is found in richness of love, peace of mind, health, and spiritual understanding. Lack of stress plays a key role in their good health.

**HOW OLD ARE YOU?** Your chronological age in years is different from your mental or physical age. We gauge physical age by appearance, lab test scores, ability to do things, overall health. Mental age is our ability to think, reason, remember, and focus.

**STAY SHARP!** Ann Landers always said, “If you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.” Surely this is true of mental function. Such things as playing cards, doing crossword puzzles, reading, singing, taking a class, playing board games or a musical instrument, dancing, and writing all lower risks of memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer’s disease.

## **FEWER CALORIES: ONE SECRET TO LIVING LONG AND WELL**

Longevity studies have shown over and over again that reduced calorie intake is associated with living longer. In animal experiments the lower food intake group always lives longer than the all-you-can-eat group.

Epidemiological evidence from humans shows the same thing. A Gallup pole of people beyond age 90, asked the question, “Why do you think you outlived your siblings?” The common reply was, “I didn’t eat as much.”

**OVERINDULGANCE** in food, more than any other factor, shortens the lifespan and increases risks of developing chronic illness.

**LONGEVITY PREDICTIONS** are now for a shortening of average lifespan in the United States. Presently, average expected age is 79 years. Up until now, there was always a slight increase in average longevity predictions each year. Asked why this alarming change, the

experts listed the epidemics of OBESITY and TYPE II DIABETES as causes of our decreased life expectancy. Both are preventable chronic diseases linked to poor diet and to lack of exercise.

### **OVERSIZED PORTIONS SHORTEN LIFESPAN, AND INCREASE RISKS OF CHRONIC ILLNESS.**

**SUPER SIZE ME** is a documentary film produced by Morgan Spurlock. For one month, he ate three meals per day at McDonald's, and each time they asked if he wanted to "Supersize" his portions, he said, "Yes." His weight and waistline shot up, as well as his cholesterol, liver enzymes, and blood pressure. He developed a fatty liver, facial blemishes, depression, poor sex drive, mood swings, low energy. His physician begged him to stop since obviously his diet was harming him. He stuck it out to make his film.

McDonald's is no longer pushing "supersize" portions, but many other restaurants serve huge servings, far more than most people can or should eat. If food is presented, it is an excuse to eat it.

**OVERSIZED IN PHILADELPHIA.** A few years ago Philadelphia had more fat people than any other city in the United States. Detroit has now edged them out for first place. At a popular Italian restaurant in Philadelphia, individual servings of soup, salad, and pasta arrive in twelve inch bowls. Obese patrons reflect the portions and ethos of what's wrong with the health of American people today. Oversized portions encourage overeating.

**THE 100-CALORIE SOLUTION:** To counter these cultural forces that encourage Americans to add pounds, James Hill, Ph.D., director of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, says we need a better balance between how much we eat and move. Moving more and eating less can help most people prevent the average one to three pound weight gain per year. He recommends walking 2,000 more steps and eating 100 fewer calories per day. He started the America on the Move (AOM) program, a national initiative. Presently, 17 states and two cities are taking on the AOM challenge to support healthy eating and active living. Visit his website:

[www.americaonthemove.org](http://www.americaonthemove.org)

**FIT IN DENVER:** Overall, citizens of Denver are fit with few who are obese. The sunny days, nearby mountains and inviting climate cause the populace to get out and walk, bike, ski, run, and exercise. In Denver, restaurant food portions tend to be realistic and menus feature salads, soups, fruits, vegetables and in general, a more healthful fare.

**THE PROBLEM IS NOT JUST EATING HUGE QUANTITIES OF FOOD, BUT ALSO EATING THE WRONG KINDS OF FOOD.**

Longevity runs in families, and so do certain diseases like diabetes and heart disease. These tendencies are in the inherited genes. Yet, studies of Swedish twins raised apart showed that only about 30% of aging can be accounted for by genes. Why do certain family members live longer than others, and why do some NOT get inherited diseases or get them later in life or less severely? Part of the answer boils down to everyday food and lifestyle choices that cause these genetic tendencies to be expressed or not.

**FOOD POWER:** Food plays a far more important role than just supplying calories and nutrients. Each bite of food we eat speaks to our genes. Food can alter and influence fulfillment of the genetic blueprint we inherited. This is a far more vital and powerful role for food than previously was known. Natural nutrients have known receptors, pathways, and roles to play in a healthy body. But chemicals, altered fats or denatured proteins, man-made substances are not recognized in the same way. They deliver different and potentially harmful messages that may alter our genetic game plan.

**THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET-ANOTHER KEY TO LIVING LONG AND WELL.** Probably the single most important thing you can do, along with moving and using your body, is to eat the way people around the Mediterranean basin do. Time and again, this eating style has been shown to help prevent or reverse disease, including chronic illnesses we are plagued with in this country.

Studies have shown that the closer one follows the Mediterranean style of eating, the longer they live and the less they develop certain cancers and chronic diseases.

**SLOW FOOD:** A crucial part of the benefit from this diet stems from taking time to eat, enjoying the food, and eating healthful foods in a non-stressful environment.

**WHAT IS THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET?**

The emphasis is on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans and some fish. A little poultry, dairy, and eggs are included, but very little red meat and sweets are eaten.

## HOW TO FOLLOW A MEDITERRANEAN DIET

- 1. COOK WITH AND USE OLIVE OIL.** Eating olives is also a good idea. Best bet is to buy organic extra virgin olive oil.
- 2. EAT FISH OFTEN.** The combination of Omega 3 fish oils with Omega 9 oils in olive oil are synergistic for good health. Sardines are a wonderful food! Try them packed in oil on organic rye crackers.
- 3. EAT LOTS OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, AND HERBS.** It is customary to shop the farmer's market for fresh vegetables and fruits, and plan meals around what is available in Mediterranean countries. Colorful fresh food is the key to this wonderful cuisine.

**JUICING:** Consider juicing as a way to enhance this part of your diet. A glass of fresh vegetable juice in the late afternoon or before dinner is a wonderful way to promote your good health.

- 4. LIMITED ANIMAL PROTEIN.** Most Mediterranean cuisines include a little chicken along with fish, but often they eat vegetarian meals. Meat may be eaten as seldom as two or three times per month. The diet does include fresh low-fat cheeses, and eggs, but their animals do not get BGH, estrogen, and antibiotics as ours do.
- 5. EAT BEANS AND DRIED LEGUMES** that are soaked and cooked a myriad different ways. Bean salads, soups, baked casseroles, pastas or mashed and refried are delicious and nutritious.
- 6. EAT WHOLE GRAINS** regularly. Brown rice is the best-tolerated grain. Many people have digestive problems from wheat or are allergic to it, with corn running a close second. Amaranth, spelt, teff, kamut, quinoa, oats, barley, millet, buckwheat, bulgur, wheat berries, rye are nutritious grains or seeds to try. Look for pastas, breads, cereals, flours at health food stores. Grains plus beans provide complete protein nutrition. Eden has a new line of canned organic beans with rice. Add a salad and an apple for a wonderful lunch!
- 7. WINE** is typically consumed as a part of a meal. Alcohol appears to be beneficial with limited use. One glass of wine per day for women, and one and one-half for men is a recommended amount for those without an alcohol problem.
- 8. SWEETS are limited.** Dark chocolate is beneficial, but the sugar in milk chocolate is undesirable. Apricots dipped in dark semi-sweet chocolate or stuffed with nuts and goat cheese, dates rolled in nuts and stuffed, figs poached in orange or lemon juice, poached pears, sliced chilled orange slices in rose water with chopped pistachios,

stewed spiced apples with a dollop of yogurt, or fresh fruit make a wonderful dessert.

**ANOTHER KEY TO LIVING LONG AND WELL IS EXERCISE.** Our bodies are basically a Paleolithic body style intended for the nomadic life of a hunter-gatherer. Exercise is a low-tech way to extend life, prevent or reverse disease. With exercise, more is better up to about 80 minutes per day, with about 15 minutes the minimum for making a difference in health outcome. A slow, steady, comfortable walk of 30 to 60 minutes at least three times weekly has definite health benefits.

**STRESS IS DEFINITELY RELATED TO A SHORTER LIFESPAN.** Successful aging is related to our ability to cope with stress. Stress changes metabolism to a fight or flight response to a threat by increasing blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate to provide more oxygen, and glucose is mobilized for use by muscle. Digestion, sex drive, and the immune system are suppressed as they are not needed in an emergency situation.

**LACK OF SLEEP** increases stress and reduces healing time. More people are gradually reducing hours of sleep by staying up later more often. There is no substitute for restful sleep.

Regular meals of low-glycemic healthful food, with a 4:00 PM snack are helpful in keeping daytime stress at a lower level. Low blood sugar that often comes from eating sugar or rapidly absorbed carbohydrates is a stressor. Alkaline foods and water tend to combat the acidity we experience from stressful living. Many foods increase acidity. TDC has handouts on alkaline foods and books discussing alkaline diets.

Regular exercise, drawing, writing, listening to good music, Tai Chi, yoga, meditation, massage, religious services, breathing techniques, posture and movement work with Feldenkrais or Alexander Technique training help rid stress held in our bodies. TDC has Andrew Weil, M.D.'s audio CD on breathing with very useful exercises. Negative magnetic fields can help reduce body's stress reaction. Magnetic chair pads or mattress pads can be helpful. TDC handles William Philpott, M.D.'s magnetic products. See his book, Magnets.

**HORMONE SUPPORT OR HERBAL CHOICES** can help slow the aging process. Reduced levels of adrenal, thyroid, and sex hormones play a role in aging. Many herbs and homeopathic remedies have a balancing effect on our hormones.

Use of estrogen, progesterone, DHEA, pregnenolone, testosterone, human growth hormone (HGH), thyroid hormone may help slow aging when used properly. We frequently test for and add DHEA and pregnenolone when levels are low. DHEA is the major hormone secreted by the adrenal gland and its use is associated with better stamina and coping with stress. Pregnenolone is called the mother hormone since adrenal and sex hormones are made from it.

**LIVING LONG AND WELL** depends upon how well you take care of yourself over a lifetime. Following a Mediterranean style of eating, reducing stress, getting enough exercise and sleep, keeping social contacts and spiritual ties are all things you can do that make a tremendous difference.

Kathryn Hepburn summed it up with her advice:

- 1) Don't get fat.
- 2) Sleep enough.
- 3) Don't put things off.
- 4) Exercise outdoors every day in all kinds of weather.
- 5) Learn to do things that don't cost anything.
- 6) Tell the truth.

My Texas daughter told me that she, too, admires Kathryn Hepburn. She gave me Kathryn's recipe for brownies, and added one more bit of her advice:

- 7) Don't put too much flour in your brownies.

### **KATE'S FAMOUS BROWNIES**

2 Squares unsweetened chocolate	8 T butter
1 cup xylitol* or sugar	2 eggs
½ tsp. vanilla	¼ tsp. salt
1 cup chopped walnuts	¼ cup flour**

1. In a heavy saucepan over very low heat, melt chocolate & butter.
2. Remove from heat and stir in sugar or xylitol.
3. Beat eggs and vanilla.
4. Quickly stir in walnuts, flour and salt.
5. Spread batter in a well-greased 8 x 8 inch baking pan.
6. Bake 40-45 minutes.
7. Cool on wire rack.

\* Xylitol may be used instead of sugar. It has a lower glycemic index. In large quantities it can cause gas in some people. TDC and health food stores sell Xylosweet sugar substitute. \*\*Try quinoa, teff, or brown rice flour if you want to avoid wheat.