



Live Longer. Healthier. Happier.

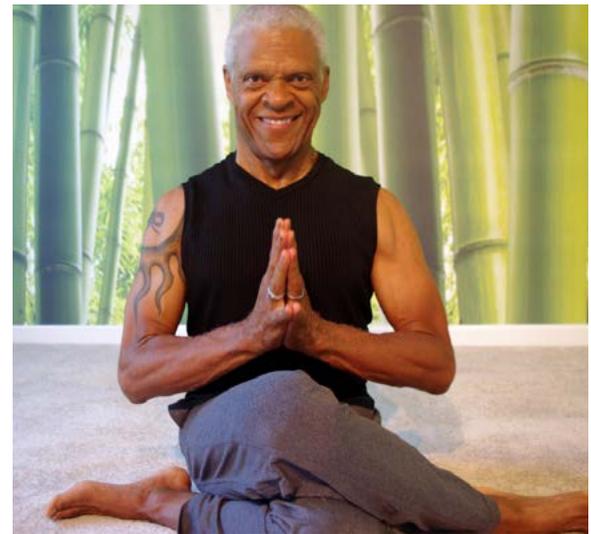
By Stephen C. Schimpff, MD

We would all like to live a long time but especially we would like to live healthy. That's doable. There's no magic elixir and there's no pill from your physician.

It's all a question of modifying your lifestyles. The seven keys to healthy aging include:

- 😊 What you eat
- 😊 How you move
- 😊 How you manage your stress
- 😊 Getting adequate sleep
- 😊 Not smoking
- 😊 Intellectual challenges
- 😊 Social engagement





Follow them, preferably beginning in early adulthood, and you will prevent most of the chronic diseases that beset us today and you will live a much longer, healthier life.

Let's begin with food. The standard American diet is SAD; it's extremely unhealthy. The food marketers' claim to the contrary but the truth is American eat much too much processed food, the wrong fats, lots of sugar.

Everybody likes to go to a fast food outlet but in general that food is not in your best interest nor are the prepared foods in the grocery store.

Here's what you do need to eat: Nine servings of vegetables every day; multiple different colors, multiple different types. Include dark green leafies every day. Why so many vegetables? Because they are full of essential nutrients. And as we get older, we absorb nutrients more poorly so we need extra to make up the difference.

And no that doesn't mean taking supplements. Much better to get your nutrients in real food.

Next is movement. Our bodies were designed to move but we tend to be sedentary. "Sitting is the new smoking." Get a minimum 30 minutes of aerobic exercise such as simple walking every day, preferably a brisk walk.

Stand up and move around a bit every hour for about five minutes. Add in resistance exercises, i.e. weights three or four times a week. Some of these you can do at home such as put

up push-ups, sit ups, the plank and squats. Others are best done at a fitness center. Add in some balance exercises because your balance mechanisms tend to decline with age.

Stress is the big, unrecognized killer. Not the acute stress of seeing a beer truck barreling down the road at you but the low-grade, chronic stress that comes from all sorts of issues in life.

This stress puts out low but managing stress critical. Good food and exercise are critical. You might try yoga, meditation, massage or just some quiet contemplation.

Something easy to do is coherent breathing. Sit comfortably and breathe in slowly for a count of five then breathe out slowly for a count of five. Continue that for 10 or 20 minutes. It settles down stress and feels good.

Sleep cleans your brain; it's when memories are filed securely and when negative emotions are worked through. Sleep helps avoid Alzheimer's disease and reduces chronic stress.

It's not true that older people need less sleep. Eight hours is about right but since older people wake up at night to go to the bathroom, you may need to be in bed longer. Keep to a schedule. No horror movies before bed but consider some relaxing music. Keep your bedroom completely dark; turn off mobile phones and ditch the alarm clock with their digital face lights.

Of course, tobacco is a no-no. Don't even think about it.

The brain needs to be exercised. Challenge your brain every day by doing something different—learning a new language, practicing a musical instrument, doing some

artwork. Try a difficult game like chess or bridge. It doesn't matter what you do, it matters that you actually do it. Your brain needs exercise just as your muscles do – "use it or lose it."

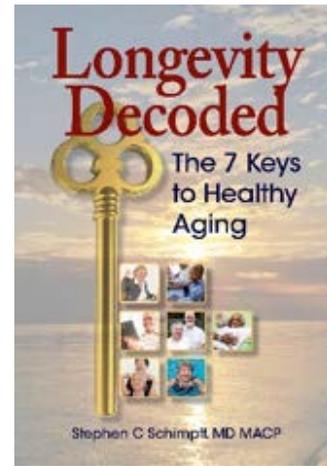
Humans need interaction with each other; we cannot be hermits. I call it social engagement. Make and keep friends. Get out and about, join groups. This is absolutely critical for your brain's function and development. If you are feeling lonely from the loss of a spouse, reach out to friends. They probably think you want to be left alone but, if asked, most will be more than pleased to interact.

Here's one additional key. Give thought to your life's purpose. Your career may be over now but still you need a purpose. This doesn't mean becoming president of a board but it does mean participating in whatever motivates your inner self.

Maybe it's just working in the garden so that you can watch the flowers grow. Not sure what it is? Try meditation and see what just pops into your mind. Considering your life's purpose as you're getting older is very valuable.

Everyone wants to live long and to be healthy —these 7 lifestyle changes can make a dramatic impact on your life, your health and your longevity. The best part is that they cost no money but they do require your time and commitment.

Following these seven keys will pay generous returns over the years ahead, and there's a bonus: You'll become a role model and inspiration to your children and grandchildren!



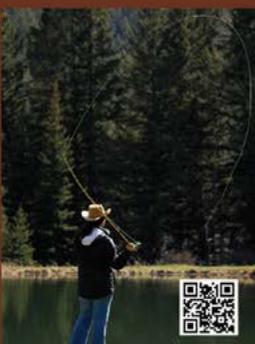
Stephen C Schimpff, MD, MACP, is a quasi-retired internist, professor of medicine and public policy, former CEO of the University of Maryland Medical Center and author most recently of Longevity Decoded – The 7 Keys to Healthy Aging. Find it on Amazon.com

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