Lifewire: To live long and thrive

by Ven_Griva

"The days of our years are three score and ten ..." So it says in the Bible in Psalm 10. In biblical times, before the advent of modern medicine, 70 years was a remarkably long life.

But life expectancy in the United States has exceeded that standard. According the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a U.S. baby born today can expect on average to live to be 77.9 years old.

While the time when we become "old" is not etched in stone, there is no escaping that fact that the alternative to dying is aging. The good news is that modern science is working tirelessly to help us find ways to slow down the aging process.

One recent study, according to a report from the Boston University New England Centenarian Study, shows that about 30 percent of the aging process is determined by heredity. Simply put, if your parents and their siblings enjoyed long life, the chances are good that inherited genes from them that will enable you to live long.

The reverse, too, is true. If your parents died prematurely from disease, you too could be at risk. Yet even that can be influenced in ways that will lengthen your days.

That's because lifestyle and environmental factors determine the remaining 70 percent, researchers say. Here are tips from Consumer Reports onHealth magazine aimed at helping you to live long and prosper:

- Exercise. Regular exercise can reduce blood pressure, heart disease and the incidence of diabetes. Daily activity even lowers your levels of bad cholesterol and increases your levels of good cholesterol. And the exercise doesn't have to be a daily grind. Walking 30 minutes at a good pace will work. An hour a day is even better.

- Stay trim. Study shows that carrying 30 extra pounds, not unusual for Americans, puts you at risk for metabolic syndrome. The syndrome is defined partly by excess abdominal fat. It is a potent risk factor for diabetes and heart disease, both of which can accelerate aging. Recent research shows moderately overweight people who cut their caloric intake by 25 percent lost 10 percent of their body weight in six months. Doing so improved several likely markers for longevity.

Eat right. Research has shown that the Mediterranean diet - lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts,

legumes, fish, olive oil and moderate amounts of wine - has been linked to longer life and less heart disease. In fact, one study found that the Mediterranean diet reduced arterial inflammation and insulin resistance significantly better than a "heart healthy" low-fat diet. And when you eat your fruits and vegetables, try to consume those with vivid colors. They have been found to be rich in antioxidants, nutrients and other beneficial substances linked to long life.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

What goes up must come down, a fact of life that applies to just about anyone who uses a ladder.

According to a study published in May in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine and conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Columbus Children's Hospital, more than 2.1 million individuals were treated in U.S. emergency rooms for ladder-related injuries from 1990 through 2005. According to the study, the number of nonfatal ladder injuries treated in emergency rooms jumped by an alarming 50 percent in that time.

The reasons for the increase are unknown. Still, the findings suggest that there needs to be more education about ladder safety, said study co-author Lara Trifiletti, an assistant professor and researcher with the hospital research center.

"It's a little bit alarming that the numbers are so high and that they've increased over time," Trifiletti said. "We need to really think about some prevention strategies and interventions that would reduce these numbers."

The researchers found that 2,177,888 people suffered ladder injuries from 1990 to 2005, and their ages ranged from as young as 1 month to as old as 101 years. Three-quarters of the injured were male. An average of 135,000 people sustained ladder injuries each year.

Some reports included information about where the injuries occurred. Ninety-seven percent of those cases happened in what Trifiletti calls "non-occupational" settings like homes and farms.

"Maybe a lot of people are doing do-it-yourself home repairs," Trifiletti said. "That may be one explanation why we see such a high rate in homes."

Dr. Michael Mello, director of Injury Prevention Center at Rhode Island Hospital, said the findings appear to

be valid. According to him, ladder injuries should not be taken lightly.

"Many of these fractures are very complex and require extensive surgery. That's only part of the problem. These fractures of hands, wrists, ankles and feet can require future surgeries, rehab and lifelong arthritis or chronic pain," Mello said.

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