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## Small Lifestyle Changes Can Boost Longevity

***Not smoking, exercising, moderate drinking, eating veggies could add 14 years, study says***

TUESDAY, Jan. 8 (HealthDay News) -- People with four healthy lifestyle behaviors -- not smoking, physical activity, moderate alcohol consumption, and eating five servings of fruit or vegetables a day -- live an average of 14 years longer than people with none of those behaviors, a new British study contends.

Researchers at the University of Cambridge and the Medical Research Council looked at 20,000 men and women, aged 45-79, who filled out a questionnaire about the four health behaviors. The participants, none of whom had known cancer or heart or circulatory disease, filled out the questionnaire between 1993 and 1997 and were followed until 2006.

For each of the four healthy lifestyle behaviors, a participant received one point.

After they factored in age, the researchers found that participants with zero points were four times more likely to have died over an average period of 11 years than those with four points.

In addition, the study authors concluded that participants with a score of zero had the same risk of dying as someone 14 years older with a score of four. This was independent of body-mass index (BMI) and social class.

While the findings need to be confirmed in other populations and an analysis of how these combined health behaviors affect quality of life is needed, the researchers said the results suggest that these four healthy lifestyle behaviors could markedly improve the health of middle-aged and older people.

The study is part of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC), conducted in 10 European countries. EPIC is the largest-ever study of diet and health.

There is strong evidence that individual lifestyle factors such as smoking, diet and physical activity influence health and longevity, but there has been little research into their combined impact, according to background information in a news release about the study.

The study was published in the journal PLoS Medicine.

### **More information**

The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about healthy living.

-- Robert Preidt

**SOURCE:** PLoS Medicine, news release, Jan. 7, 2008



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