6 Science-Backed Ways to Add Healthy Years to Your Life

5 MIN READ

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Simple, science-backed habits that increase your healthspan, adding years of health and vitality without expensive treatments.

At the very first ***Super Age Live***, cardiologist and longevity researcher Dr. Eric Topol joined Super Age founder David Harry Stewart and founding editor Heather Hurlock to unpack the science of aging from his new book ***Super Agers***. The takeaways? Longevity isn't about hacks or expensive treatments: it comes down to a handful of daily practices, backed by decades of research, that you can start today.

Here are the most important things you can do for a longer, healthier life, according to Dr. Topol:

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1. Move Your Body: Aerobic + Strength Training

If you do nothing else, exercise.

- **Aerobic activity**: Aim for at least five **30-minute sessions a week of brisk walking**, cycling, swimming, or other forms of cardio. Even a few thousand steps daily makes a measurable difference.

- **Strength training**: Just two **30-minute sessions a week of lifting weights**, resistance training, or bodyweight moves builds muscle, balance, and resilience. Dr. Topol started at age 69 and says he's now stronger than he's ever been.
- **Balance training**: Often overlooked, balance work (think yoga or **stability exercises**) protects against falls and helps preserve independence as you age.

Bottom line: It's never too late, or too early, to get stronger. Even in your 70s or 80s, muscle growth and performance gains are possible.

2. Protect Your Sleep

Sleep is more than rest; it's when your brain and body repair.

- **Deep sleep clears toxic waste** from the brain through the glymphatic system, helping prevent neurodegeneration.
- **Regularity matters**: Going to **bed and waking up** at consistent times keeps circadian rhythms in sync.
- **Sleep quality is linked to longevity**: Poor sleep raises risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia through chronic inflammation. **Track your deep sleep** to see how you can improve your sleep quality.

Dr. Topol **tracks his sleep with an Oura ring** and notes that improving deep sleep is one of the most powerful levers for healthy aging.

3. Eat Real Food, Avoid Ultra-Processed Foods

Diet isn't about fads—it's about inflammation control.

- **Cut ultra-processed foods (UPFs):** Boxes and bags full of unpronounceable ingredients are engineered to **trigger overeating and inflammation**. Dr. Topol calls them "UFOs, unidentified food-like objects."

- **Favor anti-inflammatory foods: Largely plant-based**, **Mediterranean-style diets**, rich in fiber, vegetables, fruits, legumes, fish, and healthy oils, have the strongest evidence for reducing chronic disease risk.

- **Go light on red meat:** Occasional consumption is fine, but making it a staple **raises inflammation** and cardiovascular risk.

4. Manage Inflammation, the Silent Driver of Aging

Nearly every age-related disease, heart disease, Alzheimer's, cancer, diabetes, links back to **chronic inflammation** and an immune system that's out of balance. Lifestyle practices like exercise, diet, stress reduction, and sleep are all powerful anti-inflammatories.

Emerging drugs **like GLP-1 agonists (Ozempic, Mounjaro**) also appear to reduce systemic inflammation, but Dr. Topol advises waiting for more data before using them preventively.

5. Know Your Risks Through Testing

Personalized prevention is the future. Dr. Topol highlighted tests that may soon be part of routine care:

- **Polygenic risk score** is **a genetic test** that combines hundreds or thousands of small DNA variants to estimate your inherited risk for common diseases like heart disease,

cancer, or Alzheimer's. Though not a standard medical test, you can get a polygenic risk score through specialized genetic testing companies or certain medical centers, usually with a simple saliva or cheek swab kit.

- **DEXA scans** can do much more than **measure bone density**; they can also give detailed readouts of muscle mass, fat mass, and fat distribution. The problem, he noted, is that most health systems only provide the bone density report, even though the machine collects the full body data. To get the muscle and fat measurements, you often have to ask specifically or go through independent clinics that offer full-body composition scans, sometimes at a fraction of the cost of a hospital test.
- **Organ clocks** (coming soon) can estimate the **biological age** of specific systems like the brain, heart, or immune system, helping target interventions. They work by analyzing proteins or other biomarkers in the blood to show which organs may be aging faster or slower than expected. While still emerging, some research labs and early startups are beginning to offer these tools, giving people a more precise way to target lifestyle changes or preventive care.

6. Connection and Mindset Matter

Longevity isn't just biological, it's social and emotional.

- **Social connection** **protects against cognitive decline** and early death as strongly as quitting smoking.
- **Positive attitudes about aging** are linked to **longer, healthier lives**.
- **Nature and purpose** add resilience: **Time outdoors** and a **sense of meaning** buffer stress and inflammation.

The Simple Science of Living Longer

Despite all the futuristic talk about **senolytics, telomeres, and biotech** breakthroughs, Dr. Topol stressed that the fundamentals still matter most.

“Move. Sleep. Don’t eat dumb stuff. Talk to your neighbors,” Stewart summarized.

Do these consistently, and research shows you can add 7–10 years of healthy life, without expensive treatments.

Longevity isn’t about finding a miracle drug. It’s about daily habits, fitness, rest, food, and connection that shape your biology and your future.

Watch the Super Age Live conversation with Dr. Eric Topol

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