These 6 Health Choices Compound Over Time

6 MIN READ

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Longevity experts reveal the habits, tests, and foundations that truly add up over time.

If you want to invest in your health, there is no shortage of places to spend your time and money. From supplements and saunas to massages, meditation apps, gym memberships, and even genetic testing, the options are seemingly endless. But what actually moves the needle forward?

In midlife and beyond, you're juggling a lot of responsibilities with limited time and energy. We spoke to health professionals about which activities offer the best health ROI, delivering the greatest impact for the time, money, and energy you invest.

Rethinking Health ROI

When you **invest your money**, you want it to work for you over the long haul. Thanks to compounding, the returns continue to grow over time. Similarly, the time, energy, and money you invest in your health should continue to pay off as you age. This isn't about quick wins or dramatic makeovers. It's about consistency and sustainability.

The goal is to protect your cognition, mobility, energy, and independence. High-ROI health investments can deliver long-term benefits that compound over the years and promote your longevity and vitality.

Build Your Health Foundation with These 6 Pillars

It’s tempting to get swept up in the latest trends and technology promising you a long life and robust health. But you want less hype, more substance. Making sure you have a solid health foundation is essential for getting the greatest return on your investment. In the field of lifestyle medicine, which works toward prevention, the **six pillars to focus on** include:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Stress management
- Avoidance of risky substances
- Social connection

You wouldn’t buy furniture before a house is built. Similarly, you should focus on these areas first before adding any extras. While focusing on six pillars can feel like a lot, the good news is that there is some overlap.

“Exercise is shown pretty consistently to decrease cortisol and decrease stress,” said Dr. Nadia Sirdar, MD/MPH, physician and practice owner of **Bethesda Modern Primary Care**.

It doesn’t have to cost anything either. You can do it on your own, watch a YouTube video, or use a free app. But don’t feel bad if you need to spend money for access and accountability. “Movement is essentially free. If a gym membership or simple home equipment helps reinforce the habit, then it’s money well spent,” said Dr. Matt Kaeberlein, a world-renowned longevity expert and CEO of **Optispan**.

Eating the rainbow and **increasing your plant diversity** can **support your gut microbiome** and overall health.

“Investing in a quality diet. Eating whole, minimally processed foods will always outperform low-quality, ultra-processed options, even if it costs a bit more. It’s one of the best long-term investments you can make,” said Kaeberlein.

Kaeberlein stated that some of the highest ROI health habits vary by individual. “For some, that might mean high-quality prepared meals; for others, a gym membership, a personal trainer, or a wearable that improves sleep and recovery habits,” he added.

However, a few things are generally recommended for everyone. “A few diagnostics rise to the top for almost everyone: comprehensive bloodwork and a DEXA scan each year. These give you exceptional visibility into metabolic health, inflammation, and body composition, which are all foundational for aging well,” noted Kaeberlein.

Focus on Prevention

Let’s get down to the brass tacks: catching issues can literally save your life. Not only that, it can give you time to turn things around (for example, lowering your A1C or cholesterol levels) or keep tabs on any potential problem areas (like abnormal screenings).

“The number one thing is prevention,” said Sirdar. “So when you talk about longevity, you’re talking about not just aging without disease, but aging while you’re thriving.”

That means keeping up with regular physicals, blood work, cancer screenings, and other prevention-oriented tests. “For example, a post-menopausal woman needs her DEXA to make sure her bone mass density is normal,” added Sirdar. “If it’s not normal, you want to catch that early because there are medications you can give that person to modify that risk, or if that person has a family history. There are different

things to do at an earlier point before you have that bone break."

So if it's been on your to-do list to schedule that physical, breast cancer or prostate cancer screening, dental appointment, or blood work, block out time in your calendar and get it done. It can take commitment, but it is well worth it and one of the best things you can do for your health ROI.

If you're looking to focus more on your hobbies that have a health ROI, **learning another language** can promote neuroplasticity, while **reading activity may prevent long-term decline** in cognitive function in older people.

Supplements: What Makes Sense (and What Doesn't)

According to the **American Medical Association**, there are more than 100,000 different supplements on the market, which is part of a billion-dollar industry. With such a dizzying amount of choices, what actually makes sense and what doesn't?

First, Sirdar noted that supplements are unregulated, and while many promote certain benefits, there is limited data to support that. But some may actually be worth taking.

"There are certain supplements that do have evidence behind them. For example, creatine has been shown to help with muscle mass. That's something that I tell most of my postmenopausal women to take," said Sirdar.

Per **UCLA Health**, researchers have found that taking creatine in combination with resistance training can help build lean body mass, may support recovery from muscle fatigue, and may be associated with improvements in certain blood lipid levels.

Sirdar also notes that magnesium may be **good for sleep**. Research has shown that **Magnesium-L-threonate may improve sleep quality** and daytime functioning.

Kaeberlein warns about collecting supplements just for the sake of it, which could be costly. It could impact your financial health, with few benefits for your physical health.

“Here are the few I consider top-tier,” said Kaeberlein:

- Vitamin D (if you’re deficient)
- Omega-3s
- Creatine

If you’re wondering what supplements might move the needle forward and get you the best health ROI, Sirdar recommends discussing your options with your physician.

What About the Extras?

Eating right, exercising, and reducing stress are essential to your well-being. While they seem fairly straightforward, our schedules, habits, culture, environment, and stressors can make it difficult to stick to them. So investing in a health professional who can keep you accountable could be a good use of your time and money.

“I think sustained behavior change is one of the toughest things to accomplish,” notes Sirdar. Her advice:

- Find somebody that can actually help you create sustainable change

Whether that’s a personal trainer, registered dietician, trained physician, or coach, if it leads to lasting change, it can give you a huge health ROI.

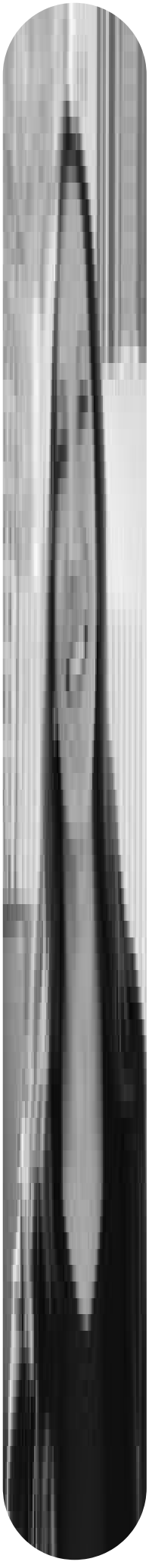
When it comes to some of the other extras that are popular right now, they can be worth it up to a point. But it’s key to understand how it impacts you.

“Other common wellness spends like massage, sauna, cold plunge, red light therapy,

green juices, etc., can be pleasant add-ons, and if they reduce stress or help you feel better, great. But it’s important to keep them in perspective: they’re incremental, not foundational,” said Kaeberlein. “The big levers remain proactive healthcare, a high-quality diet, consistent movement, restorative sleep, and meaningful social connection. Those are the investments that truly move the needle for healthspan.”

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