What’s Worth Your Money When It Comes to Increasing Healthspan? Experts Weigh In

5 MIN READ

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Longevity experts agree, the smartest way to spend $500 on your healthspan isn’t another gadget or supplement.

Chances are, you aren’t a former tech CEO with a million dollars to drop every year on hundreds of daily pills, experimental injections, and at-home plasma treatments. But if you’re already eating gobs of greens, strength training and doing aerobic exercise regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and you’ve got a little extra dough to spend on your healthspan (say, $500), what’s the most impactful investment you can make?

When I asked a handful of top anti-aging doctors, scientists, and biohackers this question, I thought they’d load up my shopping list with the latest new-fangled gadgets, in-home red light treatments, or supplement stacks. Instead, they all gave different flavors of the same answer: Spend those five Benjamins on health testing.

“The smartest spend isn’t another device for your bedside table. It’s data: Data you can unpack with an expert by your side to take you from guessing to knowing,” says **Alka Patel, a longevity physician in London**. “Otherwise, you’re just bio-guessing, not bio-hacking.”

Longevity Expert Panel:

To find the best test strategies for your $500, I consulted with Patel and three other experts:

- **Michael Lustgarten, PhD**, an anti-aging research scientist in Austin, Texas, who documents his personal anti-aging experiments **on his YouTube channel, "Conquer Aging or Die Trying!"**
- **Alka Patel, MD,** a longevity physician in London, who focuses on functional medicine and lifestyle medicine, and also offers coaching, therapy, gynaecology, obstetrics, and dermatology.
- **Kara Fitzgerald, ND**, author of ***Younger You: Reduce Your Bio Age and Live Longer, Better***.
- **Daniel Lewis**, a lawyer and bio-hacker who currently ranks 7th on **the "Rejuvenation Olympics" leaderboard**, but has previously held the top spot.

Three Smart Ways to Improve Your Healthspan

Here are three points of advice for not just how to measure your current health and longevity status, but to continue measuring it so you can track how exercise, food, and other interventions impact your longevity markers over time.

1. Get a Full Blood Panel (and Add Longevity Markers)

Comprehensive basic lab tests, which can be ordered by your doctor, are a great place to start, says Fitzgerald. These include biomarkers like your cholesterol and triglyceride levels, but also your red blood count, levels of nutrients and other substances in your blood, and markers of inflammation. These tests should cost far less than $500.

But to kick your longevity testing into high gear, she says, go for an even broader sweep: Aging-specific blood test panels can look at more markers of inflammation

and immunity, as well as levels of metals in the blood like mercury, lead, and cadmium.

Fitzgerald's recommendation for Super Agers: Your doctor should be able to order these tests from places like Quest and Labcorp. Direct-to-consumer labs like **Ulta Labs**, **Function Health**, **Inside Tracker**, and **Fountain Life**, and others offer a series of tests that can provide this type of data, and they're focused on longevity.

2. Test Your Biological and Epigenetic Age

"I'd put [$500] into a biological age test, because a bio-age test tells you how fast you're aging – not in birthdays, but in biology," Patel says. One aspect these tests focus on is inflammation: "Bio-age tests pick up those signals long before disease shows up. It shows whether your cells are sprinting towards decline, or pacing towards longevity."

Many of these tests measure something called **"DNA methylation."** In this process, groups of carbon and hydrogen molecules (called methyl groups) attach to certain parts of your genes, determining whether the genes are turned on or off. The process of turning genes on and off, or whether they're "expressed," is called epigenetics. So your "biological age" is sometimes also called your "epigenetic age."

When age tests measure DNA methylation, they use the efficiency of this process in the body as a proxy for how much we're aging – the older you are, the less efficient you are. The tests assign you a "biological age," expressed in years, which may be different from your chronological age.

These tests have been scientifically studied, but some experts still cast doubt on whether a single test at a single time is accurate. For Lewis, the solution is to do lots of them to create multiple data points. The diet and exercise portions of his longevity routines cost only about $100 per month, while his testing can be thousands each year.

Their recommendation for Super Agers: Take as many of these bio-age calculators as you can within your $500 budget, and re-test at least once per year.
Lewis, who undergoes these tests multiple times per year, suggests the Dunedin PACE test (which informs the Rejuvenation Olympics leaderboard), followed by OmicAge, GrimAge, or the Horvath clock, named for a scientist who pioneered the measure of DNA methylation. **TruDiagnostics** offers these tests and is a leader in the space.

3. Alternatively: Test Your Blood More Often.

“If you’re a baseball player, and hit four home runs in one day, but then you don’t play the rest of the year and hit zero home runs… are you the greatest player to ever live because you had one good day of data?” asks Lustgarten. Getting your longevity biomarkers tested just once, or once per year, has the same effect: It gives a snapshot of your aging and health status that may or may not be useful.

Lustgarten’s recommendation for Super Agers: More data.

Ideally, Lustgarten says, you’d test your blood markers every day. At this time, that’s not really feasible… and on a $500 budget, not affordable. A **comprehensive metabolic blood panel** from companies like Quest costs around $50. So going from one of these annual tests at your physical to four tests, one each quarter, would cost just $200. In his own bio-hacking experiments, Lustgarten gets his own blood tested twice that often.

The additional data from these extra tests, Lustgarten says, can provide more direction and feedback about how lifestyle changes and interventions are impacting your longevity and health. If you add in more leafy greens or Zone 2 cardio, for example, you’ll see how those changes are impacting your blood count, cholesterol levels, the function of your major organs, and more. You can decide to keep or kill those changes, and test out others, creating a scientific study of one.

Invest in Data, Not Devices

Eventually, Lustgarten says, all of this will likely be automated with daily data through smart toilets or other apps that can monitor what we do each day. But until then, more frequent blood testing can allow you not just to have hypotheses about your own health, but to test them.

“You don’t have to be an expert [or a research scientist]. Generating your own data and then saying, ‘I did this during this period, and I tracked it. Let me try *this* for the next period,” he says, “That’s better than just, you test [once]. You don’t track.”

Data alone, though, isn’t enough. You also need a skilled doctor to help you translate your results into action. Yes, you can become knowledgeable about your numbers and track trends, but you don’t want to rely on Google or AI alone to craft your personalized healthspan plan. Build your team of trusted experts, and **take control of your longevity journey**.

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