



Do You Want to Live Forever?

DIRECTIONS: Read the text. Answer the questions.

From Ponce de Leon, who searched for “the fountain of youth” in the 16th century, to the modern theory of cryogenics, human beings have always been fascinated by the idea of perpetual youth, and eternal life. Many myths have grown up around the idea of longevity. Some believe that it can be done by sheer willpower with diet and exercise alone. Others seek and undergo treatments that are supposed to slow, reverse or stop aging. Science says that the average human body only has the capacity to last for 90 years, and yet, one in every 5,000 people reaches the age of 100.

Adding to the incentive to try for a long life is the fact that there are several places in the world where centenarians are not at all uncommon. The Nuoro Province, off the coast of Italy, has ten times the number of 100-year-olds that are found in the rest of the world. And the island of Okinawa is known as “ground zero” for human longevity, having the longest, disability-free life expectancy on earth. Another notable population where people tend to reach one hundred years of age is the Seventh Day Adventists in California.

What is so different about these places and these people? Researchers have studied each population and come to some conclusions: there are characteristics which they all share. The first, which is the one that Americans usually find the most surprising, is that none of these people exercise. That is – they don’t jog, or go to gyms. Rather, movement is built into their lifestyles. They walk where they need to go. Many of them garden. In one way or another, their lives nudge them into regular activity. Another commonality is that all of these populations know how to “downshift;” they don’t live life in a hurry; they appreciate and make time for leisure. All of these populations also have a vocabulary for a sense of purpose. They have a reason to get up in the morning, and they feel that their lives are meaningful. While none of the centenarians studied are vegetarians, they all tend to eat a plant-based diet, and practice cultural strategies for not overeating. They connect to others: they put family first, belong to faith-based communities, and surround themselves with equally healthy, positive and spiritual people.

1. Which is more important to longevity?

- A. A low fat diet B. Regular exercise C. Regular physical activity

2. Which is more important to longevity?

- A. Being religious. B. A lifestyle that includes community and a sense of purpose.

3. Which of the following is likely to contribute to a long life? Choose all that apply.

- A. A job you enjoy B. Having a garden C. Having a group of likeminded friends
D. Joining a gym

4. What is a greater factor in longevity, your lifestyle or your genetic predisposition?