



## **Habits and Lifestyle Influence Healthy Aging**

A healthy lifestyle has a positive influence on aging and impacts health more than genetics - this is just one tip in what proves to be a long list of practical wisdom on how to extend your lifespan by years, according to aging expert Dr. Thomas Perls. He says from his research he has found while thirty per cent of how people age is influenced by genes, about seventy per cent is in habits and lifestyle. Much of his advice sounds like a no-brainer. Smoking will cut your lifespan by seven to ten years, and obesity knocks another six years off. By contrast, eating lots of fruits and vegetables, as opposed to fast food and red meat, can add up to eight years. Flossing twice a day can give you another year because it reduces the chance of gum disease, which can lead to plaque buildup in the arteries and heart disease. And drinking green tea, instead of coffee, is also a healthy habit because the anti-oxidants in green tea can decrease the risk of heart disease and cancer.

Dr. Perls also recommends learning a new language or musical instrument, which can slow down memory loss and stave off Alzheimer's disease. He likens these activities to "strength-training for the brain."

Even with bad genes that boost the risk of certain diseases, it's possible to improve the odds of living longer by getting regular checkups to detect problems early, says Dr. Perls. "The vast majority of people should be able to live to almost age ninety. But the average life expectancy is about ten years less because of some pretty bad health-related behaviors." Using the latest medical research as a guide, Dr. Perls developed an Internet quiz that calculates a person's life expectancy based on their family history and personal habits. Yet researchers are still puzzling over the extent to which genetics plays a role in extending the lives of those who live exceptionally long. Dr. Perls has produced a list of characteristics that centenarians share. Among them are a sense of humor and a zest for life, which help them manage stress, keep their blood pressure in check and prevent the onset of disease. Even when they develop illnesses, centenarians appear to have a physiological advantage that allows them to weather their disabilities better. For more information, and to take his age calculator, visit his website at [www.livingto100.com](http://www.livingto100.com).