

Wellness

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Discover the Power of These 8 Habits to Turn Back the Clock on Your 'Biological Age'

Our chronological age may be just a number, but our biological age can say a lot more about our longevity. Recent research conducted by the American Heart Association suggests that following specific guidelines can potentially reduce a person's biological age by up to five years. We'll explore the concept of biological age, the factors that contribute to it, and the habits that can help minimize it. By understanding the science behind biological age, we can make informed choices to improve our overall health and increase our longevity.

What is Biological Age?

While chronological age refers to the number of years we have been alive, biological age is a reflection of our overall health and well-being. It takes into account factors such as genetics, lifestyle, and environment. For example, a 27-year-old who smokes, doesn't exercise, and eats poorly may have a biological age of 32. On the other hand, a 49-year-old who practices healthy habits like proper sleep and a balanced diet may have a biological age of 44.



Factors Affecting Biological Age

Non-Modifiable Factors

Certain factors that contribute to biological age cannot be changed. These include genetics and, in some cases, a person's environment. While we cannot alter our genetic makeup, understanding our family history can help us make informed decisions about our health. Additionally, being aware of environmental factors like pollution and toxins can help us minimize their impact on our biological age.

Modifiable Lifestyle Aspects

Fortunately, there are several modifiable lifestyle aspects that can help us minimize our biological age. These aspects are part of the American Heart Association's checklist for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health. By incorporating these habits into our daily lives, we can slow the pace of biological aging, reduce the risk of age-related diseases, and potentially extend our lifespan.

The Essential 8 Habits for Reducing Biological Age

The American Heart Association has identified the Essential 8 habits that can have a significant impact on our biological age. Let's explore each of these habits in detail:

1. Eating Foods That Fuel You

A healthy diet is essential for maintaining cardiovascular health and reducing biological age. The American Heart Association recommends consuming mostly whole foods, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, nuts, and seeds. It is important to moderate the intake of processed foods, especially processed carbohydrates and sugars.

2. Moving Your Body

Regular physical activity is crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health and reducing biological age. The American Heart Association recommends 75 minutes of vigorous activity or 150 minutes of moderate activity per week for adults. Finding a physical activity that you enjoy and look forward to is essential for sustainability. This can include activities like dance exercise, yoga, walking, or any form of exercise that gets you moving.

3. Quitting Tobacco

Smoking has long been associated with poor cardiovascular health. However, it's not just traditional cigarettes that pose a risk. Secondhand smoke and vaping can also be incredibly dangerous. Contrary to popular belief, vaping is not a safer alternative to smoking and can lead to lung problems, cancer, and addiction to nicotine. Quitting tobacco, including both smoking and vaping, is crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health and reducing biological age.

4. Getting Healthy Sleep

Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night to improve overall health and well-being. Too little or too much sleep increases the risk of heart disease. Develop healthy sleep habits, like a consistent schedule and relaxing bedtime routine, for better sleep quality and duration.

5. Managing Weight

Maintaining a healthy weight through balanced and sustainable weight management can significantly reduce biological age and improve overall health. Prioritize nourishing foods and enjoyable physical activity for your specific body type.

6. Controlling Cholesterol

High LDL cholesterol is linked to heart disease and strokes. Monitor and make lifestyle changes to control cholesterol levels. Remain active, maintain a healthy weight, quit smoking, and incorporate foods high in soluble fiber and phytosterols to lower LDL cholesterol.

7. Managing Blood Sugar

Managing blood sugar levels is crucial for overall health and reducing the risk of heart disease. Regular monitoring, a healthy diet, and informed dietary choices are effective in managing blood sugar levels for individuals with diabetes or prediabetes.

8. Managing Blood Pressure

Optimal blood pressure levels are lower than 120/80 mmHg. The American Heart Association recommends maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, limiting sodium intake, and reducing stress to manage blood pressure. Monitoring blood pressure regularly and seeking medical advice can help individuals maintain healthy blood pressure levels. Lifestyle changes, such as incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your diet, limiting alcohol consumption, and practicing stress-reducing techniques like meditation or yoga, can have a positive impact on blood pressure management.



MINISTRONE SOUP



INGREDIENTS

Ingredients

- 15 ounce can white beans, drained, rinsed (cannellini beans or navy beans)
- 32 oz container reduced sodium chicken broth, or vegetable broth for vegan
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 28 oz can petite diced tomatoes
- Parmesan cheese rind, optional
- 1 fresh rosemary sprig
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- Fresh black pepper
- 1 medium zucchini, about 8 oz each, diced
- 2 cups spinach, chopped fresh, if frozen defrosted
- 2 cups cooked small pasta such as Ditalini or Orzo, al dente (or gluten-free pasta)*
- Extra Parmesan cheese for garnish, optional

Minestrone soup is a hearty and flavorful Italian dish that is perfect for chilly days or when you're craving a comforting meal. Made with a variety of vegetables, beans, herbs, and pasta, this soup is not only delicious but also packed with nutrients. We'll walk you through the step-by-step process of making homemade minestrone soup, along with some variations and tips to make it your own. So grab your apron and let's get cooking!

THE BENEFITS OF MINISTRONE SOUP

Healthy: Minestrone soup is packed with vegetables and beans, which provide essential nutrients and fiber.

Freezer Friendly: This soup is perfect for meal prep and can be stored in the freezer for later use.

Cozy: Minestrone soup is the ultimate comfort food that will warm you up on a cold day.

Vegetarian: By using vegetable broth and vegetarian Parmesan, you can easily make this soup vegetarian-friendly.

Easy to Customize: You can make this soup gluten-free by using your favorite gluten-free pasta, or skip the pasta altogether for a low-carb option.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 1/2 cups, Calories: 175 kcal, Carbohydrates: 31.5 g, Protein: 8 g, Fat: 2 g, Sodium: 358 mg, Fiber: 5 g, Sugar: 5 g



INSTRUCTIONS



HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Puree beans with 1 cup of the broth in a blender.
2. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven or pot over medium-high heat. Add the carrots, celery, onion, garlic and stir, saute until tender and fragrant, about 15 minutes.
3. Add the remaining broth, tomatoes, pureed beans, Parmesan cheese rind if using, salt and pepper. Add the rosemary, bay leaves, basil and parsley, bring to a boil, then cover and cook on low 40 minutes.
4. Add the zucchini and spinach, cover and simmer until the zucchini is tender, about 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Remove the bay leaves, rosemary sprig, Parmesan rind and season to taste with salt and black pepper.
6. Ladle 1-1/4 cups soup into 8 bowls with 1/4 cup pasta in each and top with extra Parmesan cheese if desired.

VARIATIONS:

No Pasta: If you want to make minestrone without the pasta, you can omit it and add diced potatoes or another can of beans.

Beans: If you want to add more beans, try a mix, like red kidney beans, along with the white beans.

Veggies: If you want more vegetables in the soup, add chopped broccoli, cauliflower, and/or green beans.

Herbs: Feel free to use any herbs you like. Oregano or thyme would also be lovely.

Add meat: Some turkey sausage or chicken sausage links would be great.

FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.menshealth.com/fitness/a20694627/crab-reach/>

Featured Exercise ► Crab Reach



HOW TO DO IT:

Starting Position: Begin by sitting up on the floor with your knees bent and your feet flat on the ground. Place your hands behind you, fingers pointing towards your feet, with your palms flat on the floor. Your fingers should be pointing away from your body.

Lifting Your Hips: Pressing through your hands and feet, lift your hips off the ground, raising them as high as possible. Your body should form a straight line from your shoulders to your knees. Engage your glutes and core throughout the movement to maintain stability.

Reaching with Your Right Arm: Simultaneously, reach your right arm over your left shoulder, rotating your torso slightly. This movement engages the muscles in your upper back, shoulders, and core.

Pause and Return: Hold the reached position for a brief pause, feeling the stretch and contraction in your muscles. Then, slowly return your right arm and hips to the starting position.

Repeat the Movement: Complete the desired number of repetitions with your right arm before switching to your left arm. Aim for 8-10 reps on each side, gradually increasing the number as you become more comfortable with the exercise.

THE BENEFITS: The Crab Reach is a highly effective body-weight exercise that targets the glutes and works the entire body. It is a fantastic addition to any workout routine as it helps improve strength, stability, and mobility.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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