

# Healthy Habits

Everyone wants to live a long and healthy life. Researchers studying longevity, or how long a person lives, look at people's lifestyles, including their habits. They do this because they want to know which habits help people live longer.

In 1970, some scientists asked 7,000 people in the United States about their habits. Then, they checked to see how long the people lived. The scientists learned that the people with the longest lives:

1. ate breakfast every day.
2. didn't eat snacks between meals.
3. weren't too heavy or too thin.
4. exercised regularly.
5. slept seven to eight hours every night—no more, no less.
6. didn't smoke.
7. drank plenty of water every day.

These seven habits made a big difference. People who did all of these things lived 12 years longer than people who did only one, two, or three.

Habits are unlike other longevity **factors**—such as **genes** or environment—because people can change their habits. It's not always easy, but it's possible to learn good habits and break bad ones.

So, how can people change their habits? Scientists say to make changes slowly. It's important to have clear goals. A goal like "live a healthier lifestyle" sounds good, but isn't clear. How will you do this exactly? A clearer goal is, for example, to take a walk every evening, or to stop eating snacks between meals. And to break a bad habit, some experts suggest replacing it. For example, if a person is trying to quit smoking, they should drink a glass of water or go for a short walk when they feel like they want a cigarette. Experts also say you should be patient. Changing habits takes time, and nobody does it perfectly the first time.

**factor** one thing that influences a situation  
**genes** cells in your body with information passed down from your parents that decides how you will develop (for example, to have blue eyes or to be tall)



The study says that healthy habits like regular exercise can help people live longer lives.

**A** Read the article. What does it say about each habit? Circle *good*, *bad*, or *no information*.

1. Eating eggs and fruit for breakfast every day	good	bad	no information
2. Not getting enough sleep	good	bad	no information
3. Going to the doctor often	good	bad	no information
4. Going for a walk every night	good	bad	no information
5. Being too thin	good	bad	no information
6. Drinking plenty of water every day	good	bad	no information
7. Exercising every day	good	bad	no information
8. Smoking	good	bad	no information

**B** Circle the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. A study of longevity looks at how *long* / *well* a person lives.
2. The scientists in the article wanted information about people's *diets* / *habits*.
3. Drinking coffee every day *is* / *isn't* one of the seven healthy habits.
4. Not getting enough sleep is a(n) *healthy* / *unhealthy* habit.
5. When you stop a bad habit, you *break it* / *pick it up*.
6. An example of a *clear* / *unclear* goal is to eat at least five vegetables a day.
7. Experts say people *could* / *should* make changes slowly.

**C** Read the advice about changing habits. Check (✓) the sentences that agree with the article.

- ☐ 1. People should make changes slowly.
- ☐ 2. It's not necessary to have goals.
- ☐ 3. People should replace a bad habit with something.
- ☐ 4. It doesn't take much time to learn good habits.
- ☐ 5. It's important to have clear goals.
- ☐ 6. People have to understand that it takes time to change their habits.
- ☐ 7. Drinking a glass of water with every meal is a clear goal.