

Eat chocolate, drink wine, add fun to life: SLU geriatrician shares secrets of staying young

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Little lifestyle changes can pay big dividends to aging baby boomers who want to stay vibrant, says John Morley, M.D., director of the division of geriatric medicine at Saint Louis University, in a new book that outlines a 10-step program to improve quality of life as we age.

“Living well and feeling good enough to do whatever you want to do throughout your lifetime is priceless,” says Morley, who is coauthor of “The Science of Staying Young.”

“I suggest little changes that involve good eating, such as including dark chocolate in your diet, drinking wine, socializing and adding simple exercises that anyone can do. It’s more fun than most people think. Being proactive about living well and feeling better for the rest of your life, regardless of your current chronological age, doesn’t have to be a chore.”

Morley, who co-directs Saint Louis University’s Center for Aging Successfully, pushes those who want to stay young to add a little SPF – spontaneous physical fun -- to their lives.

He advocates fidgeting in your office chair to burn calories, spending time walking from your car to the mall rather than driving to find a close parking space, working in your garden, taking the stairs instead of the elevator or going dancing once a week.

“Spontaneous physical fun is such a logical thing, and so appealing,” he says.

Morley and coauthor Sheri Colberg, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist and professor of exercise science at Old Dominion University in Virginia, are clear that their book is not a guide to living longer. Rather it is a passport to living better, packed with practical tips to stay young, healthy and vital.

“We both fervently believe that enjoying life is far more important than adding years, particularly if those additional years are spent in poor health,” Morley says.

“Quality of life is more important than quantity of days. Do you want to have more energy, be healthier, feel mentally sharper and rev up your sex drive? All of these are quality questions.”

In his book, Morley blends advice for living better with a prescription to detect medical problems early, when they are most easily treated. “It’s all about being proactive. Boomers like to ask questions, and we’re giving some answers so they can take control of their lives,” he says.

The book breaks the science of staying young into 10 steps.

“The process of getting older, although inevitable, can be a difficult one, both physically and mentally,” Morley says. “But take heart, because you can do many things to keep yourself feeling and looking younger than you really are.”

Source: Saint Louis University

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