

# Regular retail therapy prolongs life

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A spot of regular retail therapy really does seem to help people live longer, suggests research published online in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

And it seems to benefit older men the most, the findings show.

The authors base their findings on almost 1,850 elderly (65+) Taiwanese people who were living independently at home, and included in the nationally representative Elderly Nutrition and Health Survey in Taiwan (NAHSIT Elderly), carried out in 1999-2000.

Participants were asked how often they went shopping, with options ranging from "never" to "every day."

Intellectual and physical capacities were measured using validated questionnaires, and age, gender, education, ethnicity, financial and employment status, [lifestyle factors](#) and the prevalence of long term conditions were also factored in.

The researchers then tracked how long each of the participants lived by linking individuals to national death registration data between 1999 and 2008.

Nearly half (48%) of the participants never or infrequently shopped during the week, and around one in four (22%) shopped between two and four times a week. A further 17% shopped every day, and the remainder shopped just once a week.

Almost two thirds of respondents were under the age of 75. Just over half (54%) were men. Most had a [healthy lifestyle](#) and three out of four were financially self sufficient. Almost two thirds (60%) had up to two long term conditions.

Those who went shopping more than once a week tended to be at the younger end of the age spectrum, and male. They also tended to be [smokers](#) and drinkers, have better physical and mental health, take regular exercise and have a network of dinner companions.

The researchers used different approaches to take account of physical limitations and [cognitive impairment](#), but even so, those who shopped daily lived longer than those who shopped less frequently.

Those who shopped daily were 27% less likely to die, with male daily shoppers 28% less likely to die, compared with female shoppers who were 23% less likely to die.

The authors acknowledge that shopping could be a surrogate for good health to begin with, but suggest that shopping itself may improve health, by ensuring a good supply of food, to maintain a healthy diet, for example.

Frequent shopping among the elderly may not always be about buying things, but about seeking companionship or taking exercise, which is easier to do than more formal exercise that usually requires motivation, they say.

The conventional view of health promotion focuses on physical activity, but engaging in social and economic activities in later life may also contribute to better health, they add.

"Shopping captures several dimensions of personal wellbeing, health,

and security as well as contributing to the community's cohesiveness and economy, and may represent or actually confer increased longevity," they conclude.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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