

# Lifestyle factors may affect how long individuals live free of disability

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New research published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* indicates that a healthy lifestyle may help reduce the duration of an individual's disabled period near the end of life.

In the community-based study of 5248 [older adults](#) recruited at an average age of 73 and followed for 25 years, the average number of disabled years was approximately 2.9 for men and 4.5 for women. Multiple [lifestyle](#) factors were significantly associated with years of life and years of able life. Greater distances walked and better-quality diet were associated with a relative compression of the disabled period. Obesity was associated with a relative expansion of the disabled period. Smoking was associated with a shorter life and fewer years of able life.

"We discovered that by improving lifestyle, we can postpone death, but even more so, we can postpone disability—in fact, it turns out that we're compressing that disabled end-of-[life](#) period to a shorter timeframe," said Dr. Anne Newman, senior author of the study. "This clearly demonstrates the value of investing in a [healthy lifestyle](#)."

September is Healthy Aging Month.

**More information:** Mini E. Jacob et al, Can a Healthy Lifestyle Compress the Disabled Period in Older Adults?, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.14314](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.14314)

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