

# Parental life span predicts daughters living to 90 without chronic disease or disability

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Researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine report that women whose mothers lived to at least age 90 were more likely to also live to 90, free of serious diseases and disabilities.

The study, published in *Age and Ageing*, found [women](#) whose mothers

lived into their ninth decade enjoyed 25 percent increased likelihood of also doing so without suffering from serious or chronic illness, including [heart disease](#), stroke, diabetes, cancer, hip fractures or other debilitating disabilities.

"Achieving healthy aging has become a critical [public health](#) priority in light of the rapidly growing aging population in the United States. Our results show that, not only did these women live to age 90, but they also aged well by avoiding major diseases and disabilities," said first author Aladdin Shadyab, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health at UC San Diego School of Medicine at the time of the study. "It's not just about the number of candles on the cake. These women were independent and could do daily activities like bathing, walking, climbing a flight of stairs or participating in hobbies they love, like golf, without limitations."

Interestingly, the study also found that if only the father lived to 90, it did not correlate to increased longevity and health in daughters. However, if both the mother and father lived to 90, the likelihood of the daughter achieving longevity and healthy aging jumped to 38 percent.

The study did not address parental life span effects on sons. Rather, it analyzed data from approximately 22,000 postmenopausal women participating in the Women's Health Initiative, a large, national study investigating major risk factors for chronic diseases among women. Limitations included no knowledge of the [health](#) or cause of death of the participants' parents.

Shadyab and colleagues believe a combination of genetics, environment and behaviors passed to subsequent generations may influence aging outcomes among offspring.

"We now have evidence that how long our parents live may predict our

long-term outcomes, including whether we will age well, but we need further studies to explore why. We need to clarify how certain factors and behaviors interact with genes to influence aging outcomes," Shadyab said.

At baseline, the women in the study whose mothers lived to at least 90 were more likely to be college graduates, married with high incomes and incorporated physical activity and a healthy diet into their lives.

"Although we cannot determine our genes, our study shows the importance of passing on healthy behaviors to our children," said Shadyab. "Certain lifestyle choices can determine healthy aging from generation to generation."

**More information:** *Age And Ageing* (2018). DOI: [10.1093/ageing/afy125](https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afy125) , [academic.oup.com/ageing/article/40/10/1093/afy125](https://academic.oup.com/ageing/article/40/10/1093/afy125)

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