

A prescription for feeling young forever

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(HealthDay)—You know about the value of exercise for heart health and for staying strong and independent as you age. There's also proof that exercise keeps your body young physically as well as mentally.

A British study involving cycling enthusiasts between the ages of 55 and 79 found that their physical shape and abilities rivaled those of people

much younger.

Being physically active affects muscle strength, lung power and exercise capacity, and the sooner you start and the longer you keep it up, the longer benefits last. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a [sedentary lifestyle](#) can hasten the physical changes associated with aging and aggravate [health problems](#).

Cycling outdoors has many advantages, because it keeps you mentally alert as well as using your muscles, heart and lungs. Still, walking and virtually any type of moderate or vigorous exercise can yield benefits.

You don't have to exercise to extremes to stay youthful. Data from numerous ongoing health studies show that working out in line with national recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise a week can lower the risk of early death by 31 percent compared to people who don't exercise.

Note that if you're gung-ho about exercise, there doesn't appear to be any downside to doing even more, but there may not be any *further* increase in lowering mortality.

More information: The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons has information on how [a sedentary lifestyle accelerates aging](#) and how activity slows it down.

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