

[IMAGE]

Fight Father Time With Exercise

By Editorial Staff

We're all fighting Father Time, but some of us are winning, at least in terms of productivity, function and quality of life. What's the secret to healthy aging? You've heard it before and you'll hear it again (until you start listening): *exercise*. In this case, an increasing body of evidence suggests we may be able to maximize our cells' biological age (not how long the cell has existed, but how well it functions and how close it is to "death") with the power of exercise.

Telomeres are essentially the caps on DNA strands, and as a cell ages, its telomeres get shorter and begin to fray. But according to a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* in October, exercise can maintain telomere length and quality. Researchers grouped adults ages 20-84 based on their responses to four questions (paraphrased as follows) regarding their exercise habits in the previous month:

1. Did you participate in weight-training?
2. Did you participate in moderate exercise (walking, etc.)?
3. Did you participate in more vigorous exercise (running, etc.)?
4. Did you walk or ride a bike to work or school?

For each question answered in the affirmative, the study participant received one point. Researchers then determined that subjects with the most points also had the longest telomere lengths. Specifically, adults with all four exercise habits were 59 percent likely to have very short telomeres compared to subjects with zero exercise habits. Adults who earned three and two points were 29 percent and 24 percent less likely to have short telomeres, respectively.

While the researchers emphasize that this doesn't confirm that exercise preserves telomere length, only that people who exercise have longer telomeres than those who don't, the potential association should be reason enough to ensure you participate in the above exercise habits as often as possible. Talk to your doctor to learn more about how to fight Father Time with exercise and other [lifestyle habits](#).

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