

HOW TO EAT LIKE A CENTENARIAN

WHAT IS A CENTENARIAN?

Centenarians are people who live to be over 100 years old. People who live to be over 110 years old are called Supercentenarians. What is most remarkable about this population is that most have managed to avoid, postpone, or even overcome age-related and life-threatening diseases and disabilities. They are still living fulfilling, active lives. AND their brains are highly functional! Is it in their genes? Not entirely – in fact, genetics only accounts for 25-30% of our life expectancy. The rest is credited to lifestyle. Most centenarians have the following in common:

- Not obese
- Don't smoke
- Eat a healthy diet
- Regular exercise and movement
- Manage stress
- Strong family connections
- Avoid worry
- Positive attitude towards life
- High cognitive function (brain may be 30 years younger!)

DIETARY LIFESTYLES FOR LONGEVITY

There are several dietary lifestyles that are credited with promoting longevity. These all promote a plant-forward approach rich in healthy fats, low in animal proteins, and limited in added saturated fats, salts, and sugars.

Dietary lifestyles that support longevity include:

- Mediterranean Diet
- DASH Diet
- MIND Diet
- Blue Zones

Mediterranean Diet

Thought to be the healthiest of diets, the Mediterranean Diet is a style of eating popular among people who live along the Mediterranean Sea. This dietary approach recommends the following:

- Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, olive oil, beans, nuts, legumes, seeds, herbs, and spices: these should be the base of every meal.
- Fish and Seafood: consume at least 2 times a week
- Poultry, Eggs, Dairy: small portions daily or weekly
- Meats and Sweets: consume sparingly
- This lifestyle also promotes physical activity and consuming red wine in moderation

DASH Diet

Standing for Dietary Approaches to Stopping Hypertension, this approach aims to reduce blood pressure. The DASH Diet includes:

- Fruits and Vegetables: 4-5 servings a day
- Whole Grains: 6-8 servings a day
- Lean Proteins: 6 or less servings a day
- Beans, legumes, nuts and seeds: 4-5 servings a week
- Low-Fat Dairy: 2-3 servings per day
- Fats and Sweets: limited

MIND Diet

MIND stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. This diet combines principles from the Mediterranean Diet and the DASH Diet with the goal to reduce dementia and the decline in brain health due to aging. The MIND Diet emphasizes berries over other fruits, recommends seafood at least once a week, and promotes leafy greens over other vegetables.

10 FOODS OF FOCUS

- Leafy greens
- All other vegetables
- Berries
- Nuts
- Olive oil
- Whole grains
- Fish
- Beans
- Poultry
- Red wine

5 FOODS TO LIMIT/AVOID

- Butter/margarine
- Cheese
- Red meat
- Fried foods
- Sweets

Blue Zones

The Blue Zones are areas of the world where people live to be 100 at rates ten times greater than in the United States. These areas have been identified as Blue Zones:

- Okinawa, Japan
- Sardinia, Italy
- Ikaria, Greece
- Nicoya, Costa Rica
- Loma Linda, California

In these areas, the diet is 95-100% plant-based, including veggies, beans, and nuts, with a focus on minimally processed, mostly single-ingredient foods and healthy hydration habits. They do not eat much meat, dairy, sugary foods/drinks, or processed foods.

The Blue Zones are not just about diet. They concentrate on all aspects of health including physical activity, social relationships, community, personal fulfillment, spirituality, and stress management.

Researchers have found that these Blue Zones share the “Power 9”:

1. **Move Naturally:** move regularly without overly thinking about it
2. **Purpose:** they know why they wake up in the morning
3. **Down Shift:** find moments to decompress and manage stress
4. **80% Rule:** stop eating when you feel 80% full
5. **Plant Slant:** eat more plant-based meals
6. **Wine at 5:** enjoy a glass of wine (preferably red) a day with friends and/or food
7. **Belong:** find a faith-based community
8. **Loved Ones First:** invest time in family by living near (or with) parents and grandparents, committing to a life partner, and putting time and love into raising kids
9. **Right Tribe:** surround yourself with a healthy social circle

Visit www.bluezones.com to learn more about these populations.

FUN FACT! The name "blue zones" derived from the researchers labeling the "longevity hotspots" with blue circles on a world map.