

The

Liker Health Report



Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

Summer 2023

Live to 100

Blue Zones May Help You Achieve that Goal

Blue Zones are regions around the globe whose inhabitants live longer and healthier than inhabitants of other regions. Specifically, a higher percentage of the population lives well into their 90s and 100s. Five Blue Zones have been identified to date, including Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; Ikaria, Greece; Nicoya, Costa Rica; and Loma Linda, California. Explorer and journalist Dan Buettner, has been credited with a majority of the discovery and knowledge about these "longevity hot spots." For the last decade and a half, Buettner and his research team have focused their efforts on identifying what the inhabitants of these five regions have in common, despite their geographical and genetic distance from one another.

What Buettner's team found wasn't necessarily dramatic or extreme, but rather very sensible. Blue Zone inhabitants followed a balanced lifestyle of good health habits and social engagement – what we might describe as *wellness*. Buettner lays out nine factors which play a role in attaining centenarian status while enjoying good health. These include: moderate, regular physical activity; moderate caloric intake; a plant-based diet; moderate alcohol intake, in particular wine; stress reduction; engagement in religion or spirituality; engagement in family life; engagement in social life; and having purpose in one's life. Anyone can consciously adopt these common-sense habits and maintain better health and well-being throughout the lifespan. Research suggests that by living more like Blue Zone inhabitants, anyone can tap into their inner wellness and go beyond the limitations of genetics to live a longer life.

20 Habits for a Healthier & Happier Life

- Get a dog and walk often.
- Invest in smaller dinner plates (10-inch).
- Eat more beans.
- Know and nurture your purpose.
- Create downshifting, stress-relieving habits.
- Enjoy wine at 5 pm (in moderation).
- Find a new hobby or join a group.
- Sit down to eat meals with family and friends.
- Get enough sleep.
- Move more.
- Get out every day.
- Eat more veggies.
- Eat less meat and dairy.
- Nurture your religion or spirituality.
- Get involved in your community.
- Volunteer more.
- Make new friends.
- Enjoy meals, but stop before you're stuffed.
- Make Sunday a meal-plan, meal-prep, and meal-making day.
- Sign up to be an organ donor.

bluezones.com

RESEARCH PEARLS:

Tai Chi & Mental Health

Researchers at the University of California, San Diego reported in *Aging & Mental Health* the results of a randomized clinical trial examining the effects of tai chi and health education in adults (60+) with hypertension. The 12-week study was a community-based, in-person group that practiced tai chi (TC) and received healthy aging practice-centered education (HAP-E). Participants self-reported symptoms and levels of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, gratitude, resilience, mental health, and physical health.

The hypertension-intervention study was designed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Small declines in health were observed at the first follow-up during COVID-19 but stabilized at the second follow-up. TC conferred a greater benefit on mental health, although HAP-E was beneficial. Seventy percent of participants reported that the intervention improved their psychological resilience to COVID-19.

Aging Ment Health. 2023 Mar;27(3):496-504.

Blue Zone Diets

Eating Like the Centenarians in Sardinia

With respect to diet, Blue Zone inhabitants have high intakes of vegetables, fruits, and low glycemic index foods, which is quite similar to the Mediterranean diet. Most rely on plant-based protein sources and high fiber foods. Processed foods are rejected across the board.

Also known as the Sardo-Mediterranean diet, the Sardinia diet is a slight variation on the traditional Mediterranean diet. The primary difference is that it reflects a higher consumption of olive oil, fish, milk, dairy products, and traditional alcoholic beverages. If you want to eat like a Sardinian, structure your overall eating pattern as follows:

Enjoy daily

Vegetables: tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, cabbage, zucchini, carrots

Fruits: oranges, apples, bananas, dates, figs, peaches

Legumes: fava beans, lentils, chickpeas

Grains: barley, wheat (made into traditional flatbread and pasta)

Dairy: goat's and sheep's milk, yogurt, cheese

Fish: sea bass, anchovies, octopus, mussels, clams, lobster

Fats: olive oil, almonds, hazelnuts

Spices & Herbs: parsley, fennel, mint, bay leaves, celery seeds, garlic

Alcohol: Cannonau red wine, myrtle liqueur

Enjoy occasionally

Meat: beef, lamb, pork

Sweets: honey, candied orange peels, puff pastry

Avoid

Meats & Poultry: cured or processed meats

Processed Foods: ready-to-eat foods and snacks, sugary beverages, refined grains and oils



Dear Dr. Liker...

Are over-the-counter pain meds harmless, or should I be concerned?



Unfortunately, not all pain medications that are available over-the-counter (OTC) are considered to be without side effects. All medications, whether prescription or non-prescription, affect different people differently. First and foremost, read the package insert, box, or bottle label prior to taking any OTC medication. That way you'll know what precautions or side effects you should be aware of; how long to safely use it; and when to call your doctor if you experience a problem.

As for OTC pain medications (analgesics), the most common ones that people take are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen, or acetaminophen (i.e., Tylenol). NSAIDs can irritate the lining of the gastrointestinal tract which has two potentially serious side effects. First, it can increase the permeability of the G.I. lining and second, it can cause bleeding. Tylenol does not irritate the G.I. lining, but it can cause liver damage or even death in people who have liver disease or who consume alcohol in large quantities.

If you take OTC pain medication, (1) try to take it for the shortest duration possible, and (2) seek non-drug pain solutions, such as acupuncture, chiropractic, heat/cold therapy, rest, biofeedback, meditation, or relaxation techniques.

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