

LIVE BETTER LIVE LONGER

Fancy a 100th birthday card from the Palace? From partying to poetry, here's how to stretch your lifespan

By Helen Russell

The average life expectancy for Brits may be 79 for men and 82 for women*, but with some smart lifestyle choices, you can keep going for much longer. "Our genes only account for about 30 per cent of ageing," says professor Paul Kingston from the Centre For Ageing And Mental Health at Staffordshire University. "So most of the factors that control how long we live are in our own hands. Just a few small alterations can make a huge difference to our longevity and quality of life." The good news? "It's never too late to make changes," he adds. Here's how to stay healthy and happy to a grand old age.

1 DRINK COFFEE

Life lengthener According to the US National Cancer Institute, coffee drinkers live longer and are less likely to succumb to deadly diseases, although scientists can't yet pinpoint why. Plus, women who down three cups a day lower their risk of respiratory disease by 21 per cent, their risk of heart disease by 15 per cent, and their risk of diabetes by 25 per cent. **Just do it** Skinny latte to go! Yep, it's that simple, but don't have more than three cups a day.

2 GET JIGGY WITH IT

Life lengthener Sex can save your life. Yes, really. A study from the *British Medical Journal* found men who had three orgasms a week halved their risk of dying from coronary heart disease. Women who orgasm regularly also live longer, according to the US Longevity Project. Why? It's thanks to endorphins, which help neutralise stress hormones that are linked to everything from heart disease to cancer. **Just do it** For some DIY thrills, treat yourself to the

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LIFE-ENHANCING FRIDGE FILLERS

- Porridge oats cut your risk of dying prematurely by 22 per cent, as they lower cholesterol and blood pressure, the US National Cancer Institute found.

- Sweet potato is one of the most nutritious veg of all. With high levels of vitamins A and C, calcium and fibre, they're regularly eaten by the islanders of Okinawa in Japan who live longer than anyone else on the planet.

- Vitamin B12-rich fish such as mackerel can prevent brain shrinkage and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and strokes, according to studies in the journal *Neurology*.

- Asparagus has anti-cancer properties and may also protect liver cells against toxins, says a report from the *Journal Of Food Science*.

Lovehoney 10 Function Dream Bullet Vibrator, £9.99. Alternatively, heat up couple time with his 'n' hers lubes Durex Embrace Pleasure Gels, £14.99.

3 GET CRAFTY

Life lengthener Experts reveal that being creative can increase your longevity by up to 12 per cent**. The reason? Arty types exercise the neural pathways in their brains by trying new things, which in turn makes their minds fitter - a bit like doing Sudoku. **Just do it** Write poetry, make up song lyrics or find an art or sculpture class near you (Artcourses.co.uk).

4 BE POSITIVE

Life lengthener Happy bunnies have been found to live 19 per cent longer than Moaning Myrtilles, as they stress less and live more healthily***. **Just do it** One of the best ways to stay positive is to say "thanks" more. A study from the University of Miami found that folks who kept a journal noting what they were grateful for were happier and had fewer health problems.

5 JOG ON

Life lengthener Studies have discovered that runners live up to six years longer†, as regular cardiovascular workouts reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer. **Just do it** Interval training - mixing sprints with low-intensity walking or jogging - is better for you than running at one pace. Plus, you'll burn calories, improve your aerobic capacity and keep boredom at bay. Treat yourself to some killer tunes, like *Hed Kandi Fit & Fabulous 2013* (£6.49, Amazon) and hit the park.

6 SHOP, SHOP, SHOP

Life lengthener Newsflash: retail therapy works. Research has found those who regularly hit the high street are 27 per cent less likely to die over a 10-year period than those who shop just once a week††. Experts put this down to the positive impact of socialising and staying active (though we're sure the "new shoes" rush can't hurt, either). **Just do it** Window shopping is good, too, so try visiting that gorge dress a few times before you buy. Or, split your weekly food shop into daily trips for fresh fruit and veg.

7 PUT ON YOUR PARTY SHOES

Life lengthener "Dancing can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure," says Dr Peter Mace. Shaking your stuff three times a week is as good for you as spending the same amount of time on a treadmill. Studies also show that the more outgoing and optimistic you are, the longer you live†††. So being the life and soul of the party is good for you, too.

INSPIRED Success is getting what you want, happiness is wanting what you get. Ingrid Bergman

Just do it Get the girls round and, instead of sitting glued to *Strictly*, shimmy along to it. If you fancy some professional help, find the nearest dance class to you at Dancenearyou.co.uk.

8 PET A POOCH

Life lengthener Dog owners have lower blood pressure and fewer medical problems than the rest of the population, according to Queen's University Belfast. **Just do it** Don't have a mutt of your own? Since it's the action of stroking a pet that slows down your heart rate and reduces levels of stress hormones cortisol and adrenalin, you can still get the benefits by heading to a petting zoo or offering to pet sit for pals. Feline lovers could also visit Totnes Cats Cafe in Devon - where you can play with kitties over your cappuccino. Miaow.

9 SING YOUR HEART OUT

Life lengthener Singing increases life expectancy by exercising the major muscle groups in the upper body, as well as slashing stress and boosting heart health. Plus, banging out tunes with other people is even better for you, according to findings from a joint Harvard and Yale study. **Just do it** Visit Rockchoir.com to find a *Glee*-style singathon near you, get the SingStar out, or snap up a 14-day free trial from karaoke bar chain Lucky Voice (Luckyvoice.com).

10 BE NOSY

Life lengthener Browsing your mates' Facebook pics can be good for you, as research has found curious folk live longer††††. Those interested in the world around them have more fulfilling social groups, making them less stressed and therefore healthier. **Just do it** Rather than just pressing 'Like', actively engage your nosiness by asking pals questions about what they've been up to. It'll make you seem interested, which in turn will strengthen friendships. **F**