

# Healthy Aging Series: Seven habits for living longer

A study has been following 6,928 people living in Alameda County, California, for almost 35 years. Researchers have reported findings of this landmark lifestyle study with data collected from 1965 to 2004 and found seven health habits closely associated to living a longer life. Men who follow six or more good health practices lived on average 11 years longer, and women lived on average seven years longer than those following fewer good health practices.

These top seven health practices are strongly associated with long-term health outcomes, including less heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, and lung disease. The “Seven Good Health Practices” are:

1. Eating regular meals (avoid frequent snacking on snack foods)
2. Eating breakfast regularly
3. Getting adequate sleep (7-8 hours daily)
4. Maintaining a healthy weight
5. Not smoking
6. Limiting alcohol consumption
7. Regularly participating in physical activity

#### Other Study Findings:

- Married people have lower mortality rates than single or divorced/separated people. This is especially true for men. These findings suggest that improving your health just might start with improving your relationships and strengthening marriages.
- High religious involvement is associated with lower death rates. Weekly attendance at a religious event was found to be protective at a level between never smoking and getting regular physical activity. These individuals had a lower incidence of circulatory diseases, digestive diseases,



and respiratory diseases. Such practices were also associated with better mental health and social relationships—especially for women.

- Activity level is linked to depression. At the 20-year follow-up, both men and women with low activity levels had a significantly higher risk of depression than those with high activity levels. In addition, physical activity was found to be a protective factor for both those who ever had depression and those who currently have depression.
- Activity protects against arthritis. After 20 years of follow-up, physical activity was found to be protective against developing arthritis. The disease was linked to increasing age, being overweight, being a woman, and having depressive symptoms.

The results of this study firmly establish the importance of lifestyle on health outcomes. If you want to live longer and have a higher quality of life, practice healthy behaviors—including social interaction and spirituality.

Source: Housman & Dorman (2005). “The Alameda County Study: A Systematic Chronological Review,” *American Journal of Health Education*, 36.

**This Healthy Aging Series segment was prepared by RJF Agencies, Inc., [www.rjfagencies.com](http://www.rjfagencies.com) or 800-444-3033.**



## Minnesota Association of Cooperatives to hold annual meeting in Bloomington

What: MAC Annual Meeting—*Marketing the Cooperative Difference*

When: November 12–14, 2007

Where: Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis, Minn.

Who: MAC member cooperatives

This year's annual meeting will include a presentation by Brett Fairbairn from the University of Saskatchewan discussing whether cooperatives can survive globalization, a political commentary from U of M Professor Larry Jacobs, and a debate on private insurance versus single payer—that is, government-administered—health care. Registration information will be sent to each co-op and will also be available online at [www.wfcmac.coop](http://www.wfcmac.coop) or by calling 608-258-4400.