

BLUE ZONES

“At the end of the day, health above all.” – Grigor Dimitrov



Five steps that will help you grow younger

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American comedian, award-winning actor and best-selling writer George Burns said it best: “You can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get old.” • Burns, who lived and even worked to 100 years old, understood that the number of candles you blow out on your birthday does not determine how old you are. In fact, we have two ages: a chronological age, our age based on when we were born, and a biological age, which refers to how old our body really is and therefore, our “real” age. • In other words, you can be 70 years old but have the health of a 60-year-old. That’s right, you can turn back time, biologically speaking that is. While you have no control over the number of times your body takes a trip around the sun while you’re alive, the good news is you do have some control over how your body ages. • Depending on factors that include eating, stress, exercise and sleep habits, along with family history, behaviors, and existing conditions, your biological age will be higher or lower than your chronological one. • A lower biological age in comparison to your chronological age could be an indicator of lower risk of suffering age-related diseases so it’s worth the effort to make it happen. Here are some simple steps to help you turn back the clock and grow younger.

Take the RealAge test by Sharecare

This 10-minute test is free and will get your RealAge result: an estimate of your body’s age based on more than 100 factors affecting your health, happiness, and lifespan. You get a personalized health profile, easy-to-implement health tips, and a dashboard that shows your progress toward your health goals. To take the RealAge test, visit bzpsouthwestflorida.sharecare.com.

Learn to downshift and reduce stress

Many of us feel that the stress of the pandemic may have taken years off our life. The good news is, learning to downshift can take those years back and has been shown to be a key factor in increasing longevity. In fact, a study published in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* suggests that a downshift activity like meditation has some positive effects on telomere length. Telomeres are DNA-protein structures located on the ends of chromosomes that promote stability and protect DNA. Age is the strongest predictor of telomere length.

To help with stress reduction, RealAge test users will get access to relaxation and wellness videos that empower them to find stillness and peace in their everyday life. This includes Relax 360° — videos of a 360° view of nature that are designed to help users find serenity and freedom from stress, unwind at the end of the day, or ease themselves into a restful night of sleep.

For those who are experiencing financial related stress, RealAge also offers a free financial health assessment that delivers a risk rating for five key categories (Retire-

ment, College Savings, Life Insurance, Debt, Emergency Savings), helps a user understand whether their cause of stress aligns to their risks, and provides goals to work towards to mitigate risk in each category.

Eat a plant-based diet

Contrary to what many mainstream advertisers want you to believe, slowing down the ageing process has much to do with what you put in your body, not on your body. A study published in *The American Journal of Epidemiology* suggests that eating a diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains and low in added sugar, sodium and processed meats could help promote healthy cellular aging and is associated with longer telomere length.

Exercise

Getting your exercise through moving naturally (a Blue Zones Power 9 principle linked to longevity) is one of the best ways to walk away from father time. In a 2018 University of Birmingham study, a group of older people who have exercised all of their lives, were compared to a group of similarly aged adults and younger adults who do not exercise regularly. The results showed that those who have exercised regularly have defied the aging process, having the immunity, muscle mass, and cholesterol levels of a young person.

Get more sleep

We all remember our younger days when getting less sleep seemed to have little effect

the next day. As we get older, we quickly realize that is no longer the case and how truly important proper sleep is to our ability to function and stay healthy. A University of California, Los Angeles team study found that even one night of partial sleep deprivation activates genes related to biological aging in older adults. So be sure to take the proper steps to practice good sleep hygiene and improve your sleep.

The RealAge test will give you helpful tips and recommendations to not only get better sleep and relax more, but also find fun ways to exercise and cook up delicious and nutritious recipes to put you in charge of your well-being. Take the RealAge test today by visiting bzpsouthwestflorida.sharecare.com.

Optimize Well-Being in the Workplace

RealAge test is also a great way for work-sites to gauge employee well-being and offer tips and resources for a happier, more productive workforce. If you are a business, find out how you can optimize this free tool to build resiliency for your employees and overall company by emailing Megan.Greer@sharecare.com

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is a vital part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com