- Longevity

Focus on… Living longer

These simple lifestyle tweaks could add years to your life

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1 Keep on moving



Heard of 'Blue Zones'? These are five places around the world where people live longer, healthier lives. Researcher Dan Buettner, who identified them, found that people in these areas had lots of things in common. One of them is incorporating movement into their daily lives. 'Walk as much as you can during the day and engage in activities such as gardening and household chores,' says GP Dr Angela Rai from The London General Practice. 'Try low-intensity workouts including pilates, stretching and bodyweight exercises.'

2 Stress less

Blue Zone inhabitants have also found effective ways to manage their stress. 'Stress causes chronic inflammation,' says Dr Rai. This can lead to cardiovascular issues, as well as mental health disorders. 'Have mechanisms or tools to reduce stress levels on a daily basis, like breathing exercises, meditation and practicing mindfulness,' says Dr Rai. Check out Youtube for free guided meditations and nhs.uk for yoga exercise ideas.

3 Eat a healthy diet

It's time to step away from ready meals. Changing to a healthier diet can increase your life expectancy by up to 10 years, according to a Norwegian study. Try to eat more whole grains, nuts and fruit, and cut back on sugar and processed meats.

4 Prioritise sleep

Struggle to get the seven to nine hours recommended by the NHS? Regularly not getting enough good-quality rest can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes, heart attack and dementia. A recent US study* found that women who got an adequate amount of sleep every night lived for up to two years longer.

5 Take action

With busy lives, booking a doctor's appointment can easily slip down the todo list. But getting any niggles checked out could help detect health problems early on, making it more likely that treat-

ment will be successful. For example, breast cancer screening saves 1,300 lives a year in the UK, according to the NHS. So if something doesn't feel right, call your GP today.

6 Find a purpose

Another thing the Blue Zoners had in common was reaping the benefits of having a real sense of purpose in their lives. In fact, one study found that having things to motivate us can reduce anxiety, inflammation and also make us more likely to make healthier lifestyle choices. 'Take up a hobby or do some volunteering or charity work,' says Dr Rai.