

# FACT CHECKED BY FLIK

## HEALTHSPAN VS LIFESPAN

Lifespan, simply put, is the number of years a person lives. Healthspan is the amount of time in life spent in good health, free from diseases or illnesses. There's a common distinction between the two; living longer isn't necessarily the same as being alive and healthy. Older adults plagued by disease are more likely to have a decreased quality of life, and data suggests over three-quarters (79%) of adults 60+ have two or more chronic illnesses.

### Assessing Healthspan

Muscle mass and cardiorespiratory fitness strongly predict how we age. BIA scales, DEXA scans, and body measurements measure muscle mass. Cardiorespiratory fitness is typically assessed through  $VO_2$  max, which reflects the body's capacity to use oxygen to generate power to the muscles. Blood-based biomarkers also provide valuable insight, including cholesterol levels, HgbA1c, inflammation markers, and hormone levels. In addition, genetic testing may assess variants of the APOE gene, which are associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

### Longevity Experts

Dr. Eric Topol, a cardiologist and longevity researcher, led the "Welllderly Study," examining adults age 85+ free from chronic disease. Findings suggest healthy aging may depend more on genes that protect cognitive health, rather than simply lacking disease-associated genes. Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and bestselling author, studies longevity through population research rather than clinical interventions, focusing on regions known as Blue Zones where people live exceptionally long and healthy lives. His work highlights lifestyle factors such as daily physical activity, plant-forward diets, strong social ties, and a sense of purpose, suggesting that environment and behavior may play a larger role in healthy aging than medical treatments alone.

### Lifestyle Strategies

What actionable steps can you take today to increase lifespan and healthspan? Follow a healthful balanced diet, incorporate a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity per week, avoid smoking and the use of recreational drugs, and avoid or limit alcohol intake. Equally as important: reduce and manage stress levels, get adequate sleep for your body, and stay socially connected.