

Why DO the Japanese Have The Longest Lifespan?

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By Peter McGarry

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A recent statistic in the World Bank Group states that the Japanese have the longest lifespan in the world. Japanese men live to be 78 years old on average while the average lifespan of a Japanese woman is 85. How do the Japanese do it?

After personally experiencing the Japanese lifestyle in Tokyo for five years, I learned a little about why Japanese people live so long and will share a few of their secrets. This month will feature Part 1: It's All in the Food. Part 2: Live the Lifestyle will appear in the April edition of eNews at www.magneticrevolution.com

Part 1: It's All in the Food

The Japanese diet does not center on delicacies eaten solely for taste. In fact, most dishes are consumed based on the health benefits people gain from them. Conscious decisions are based on 'What would be good for me?' as opposed to 'What do I feel like eating?' This leads one to contemplate what is the diet for the average Japanese person and what are their secrets?

Secret #1: Eating fish instead of red meat lowers the risk of heart attacks.

For a source of protein, fish is a common staple in most meals. Red meat is significantly more expensive and less frequently consumed. Fish is healthier and the fresher it is the better. Keep in mind that not all fish in Japan is consumed raw, there are many ways that fish is prepared (grilled, baked, fried, poached, etc) and served. Furthermore, Japanese women believe that the skin on fish helps bring out the natural beauty of their skin and improves their complexion.

Secret #2: Soy products help reduce heart disease and high blood pressure and are a great source of protein.

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Tofu and soy products are also staples in the Japanese diet. Considering that saturated fats from meat and dairy products increase cholesterol, it is encouraging to know that foods derived from plants such as soy actually have the opposite effect. Soybeans provide adequate protein without the saturated fat and cholesterol of meats and high-fat dairy. Soy sauce, tofu, and natto (soy beans mixed with raw egg served over rice) are a few examples of soy products consumed daily.

Secret #3: Wheat and buckwheat flour helps in the digestive process.

The consumption of starches is at a minimum and usually contains no white flour. Japanese noodles are made from wheat flour or buckwheat flour. Both are significantly healthier than enriched white flour. Rice is a staple in the diet but consists of a small bowl at meals. The significance is to cleanse the mouth when changing dishes. Rice will remove the flavor in one's mouth much like cheese and crackers when sampling wines.

Secret #4: Smaller portions reduce the opportunity for excessive eating.

Traditional Japanese meals are about half the regular portion of western dishes. Even though most dishes are viewed as healthy, portions are still relatively small.

Secret #5: Oolong tea counter balances some of the effects unhealthy food has on the body.

Finally, the consumption of Japanese green tea or Chinese oolong tea, served hot or cold, has numerous health benefits. Tea has half the caffeine of coffee. Oolong tea, in particular, helps to break up oil in the digestive system and is usually consumed at mealtime, particularly when fried or breaded foods are being served.

These five secrets help to explain why the Japanese are so healthy and have the longest life expectancy. Part 2: Live the Lifestyle will appear in next month's edition of eNews at www.magneticrevolution.com, and will describe daily life habits in Japan. If you have any comments or questions please send them to: info@magneticrevolution.com.

Here's to your health!

Peter McGarry

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Why DO the Japanese Have the Longest Lifespan? Part 2: Live the Lifestyle

Why DO the Japanese Have The Longest Lifespan?

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Why do the Japanese have the longest lifespan? Last month you learned to eat the things Japanese people eat, and now you will learn how to live like they live. Fast, long, and lively best describes a usual day in Japan. The country is geared towards an active lifestyle, as the 'couch potato' concept is completely foreign. This lively lifestyle centers around three key aspects: work, socializing and recreation.

The workday begins early due to the commute by train that most people endure. This can range from 20 minutes to over two hours with the majority of people standing, as there are not enough seats. Walking is the focal point in the daily exercise regime. On average, people walk one to two kilometers to the train station in the morning. After arriving at the closest station to their office, people typically walk another one to two kilometers to their place of business. At the end of their long day, workers go through the same routine. All in all, the average Japanese individual will walk between three to five kilometers per day. Interestingly enough, these walks generally occur immediately or soon after meals, which helps with the digestive process.

Socializing is also different than that for western culture. As homes and apartments in Japan are considerably smaller, people opt to entertain outside of their home. This is one of the primary reasons clubs; hobbies and leisure activities play such an important role in the culture. In fact it is very uncommon to have dinner parties or get-togethers in Japanese homes. A popular alternative is to meet at public establishments for events and parties.

Automobiles do have some purpose, however they are viewed as a hobby or a luxury. Parking in Japan is costly and limited with simply not enough parking spaces for everyone to park. Cars are used for longer excursions to other cities or the countryside. The most common recreational activities are active ones. Trips to the mountains, lakes or open spaces are most popular.

Although the pace of life is fast in Japan, we can learn from certain aspects. Changing our eating habits is an important first step and combining low impact exercise after eating, such as walking, will have a greater impact. Involvement in clubs or activities that are active will also create an opportunity to engage in activity. Finally, being less reliant on our vehicles will require more effort for some daily physical activity.

So perhaps if you do what they do and eat what they eat you could be extending your lifespan. Your life is what you make it.

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