

Food for Thought  
Living Longer and Living Better

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I have had the pleasure of working with many of my patients for several years. One of the questions they ask me most often is: "Dr. Gaglione, how can I live longer and live better?" The answer to that question is surprisingly simple. There are really four answers, but none of them is medically complicated.

Eat well  
Exercise  
Get sufficient sleep  
Do not smoke

A recent study from the British Medical Journal, The Lancets, re-emphasizes that being obese can take years off your life.

This study, an analysis of 57 different studies of over 1 million people, correlated body mass index (BMI) with death rates. Individuals with a normal BMI (23-24) had the lowest death rate. Patients that were class one obese (BMI 30-35) on average lost three years of life expectancy compared with normal weight individuals. Individuals who were class three obese (BMI greater than 40) lost about 10 years of life expectancy compared with normal weight individuals. Obese patients were 66% more likely to die from heart attack and stroke and four times more likely to die of diabetes, kidney or liver problems.

Lifelong smoking will effectively decrease your life expectancy by 10 years. Be forty or more pounds overweight has the same effect as lifelong smoking. The majority of my overweight and obese patients do not smoke, often telling me "well, at least I don't smoke." The results of this study, reveal that smoking and obesity are both negatives for life expectancy.

The majority of the patients we treat at Tidewater Bariatrics are over the age of 40. Unfortunately by the time people enter their 40's, the cumulative effect of poor eating has led to the development of secondary illnesses of diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, and hyperlipidemia which can be directly correlated with obesity. This is also the age at which we often begin to feel the negative effects of obesity on our joints and wish that we could do the activities that we were doing ten years ago.

One of my patients, who is in his late 60s and has lost over 50 pounds, exclaimed this week that he is feeling better than he has felt in years. He has certainly answered the question: "how can I live longer and live better?"