





# forever young

Want to enjoy optimal health and vitality now and in years to come? Bonnie Cleaver talks to anti-ageing experts to gauge what really works

**M**any anti-ageing solutions on the market, from diet plans and supplements to skin creams and cosmetic procedures, promise to deliver fast – if not instant – results. This may sound appealing, but according to Kate Marie and Dr Christopher Thomas, authors of *Fast Living Slow Ageing* (Mileage Media, \$34.95), if you really want to look great, feel fantastic, live longer and ward off age-related disease, you have to make a long-term investment in your health. This means optimising

your nutrient intake and physical and mental activity levels, while avoiding things that accelerate ageing, such as stress, free radicals and inflammation. Here, we tap the authors' advice on how to age slowly.

## What is the slow ageing philosophy?

Slow ageing is about valuing your ageing and taking practical,

sustainable and logical steps to look after it. Much of the discomfort and disease associated with ageing is due to choices we make, or fail to make, in earlier phases of our lives.

Slow ageing means taking a close look at what you eat and drink, your work, stress and activity, as your choices will have a significant bearing on your future. Awareness and being engaged in your choices is only one aspect, though – it also takes commitment together with setting practical goals, covered in The Seven Ageless Principles (below). ►

## The seven AGELESS principles

**1 Awareness and active engagement** Be self-aware by looking closely at your diet, and stress and activity levels, and taking the time to change bad habits rather than 'falling asleep at the wheel'.

**2 Clear and realistic goals** Slow ageing isn't an aimless meander. You have to be clear and realistic about what you're prepared to do, when and how.

**3 Accentuate the positive** Rather than a 'scary' process that inevitably leads to decline, ageing should be seen as a positive growth experience.

**4 Make choices that are sustainable** Slow solutions are long-term solutions for ongoing problems – they are never a quick fix or fad.

**5 Don't be exclusive** The key to slow ageing is

not a single antioxidant or exercise regimen. It's about understanding the options.

**6 Support is out there** Even when you sit in the driver's seat, it helps to have a navigator, whether it's a doctor, dietitian, trainer, friend or family member.

**7 Do what's right for you** There are no generic answers to ageing, so do the right thing for you, at the right pace, and stick to it.







## Is it true that longevity is 'all in your genes'?

While some genes may affect lifespan or predispose us to some diseases, less than one-third of variability in human lifespan is due to inherited differences in our DNA. Our lifestyle, diet, activity and stress levels have a greater impact on lifespan and how fast we age. For example, although identical twins have exactly the same DNA they become easier to tell apart as they get older. Ageing is really a form of memory, where our experiences and exposure are cemented in our chemistry.

## What are the best foods for a long life?

A diet that's high in fresh produce is associated with a healthier and longer life. A simple way to make the most of any produce is to remember the SLOW foods acronym: Seasonal, Local, Organic and Whole. Foods that are in season are more likely to be fresh and richer in nutrients, and local produce is normally subject to less storage and handling. If you're switching to organic, start by substituting foods with the highest chemical residue, such as strawberries, capsicums, stone fruit, spinach and lettuce.

## What do I need to know about inflammation?

Inflammation is one of our body's defence and healing mechanisms that we need to fight infection and heal wounds. However, left unchecked, it can lead to damage and disease. For example, chronic inflammation can accelerate loss of bone density and cognitive function, as well as destabilise the lining of blood vessels, contributing to heart attacks and strokes. It's also a major producer of free radicals.

The simplest way to reduce inflammation is not to feed the fire. Don't overeat, quit smoking, get quality sleep and manage your stress. Also, avoid pro-inflammatory foods like fast food, junk food, high-fat animal protein, dairy desserts, biscuits and pastries.

## How much sleep do I need for optimal health?

A common myth is that we all need eight hours of sleep every night. The amount of sleep we need to feel good varies among individuals, so there is no magic number. The most important determinant is simply how well you function during the day on the amount of sleep you get.

See how you are performing by keeping a log or journal. Do you tend to feel better on Mondays? Are you making it through to the afternoon without flagging? If you're having trouble sleeping, establish a pattern that suits your body and stick to it. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends, and only go to bed when you're sleepy.

## Can exercise slow ageing?

If we're sedentary, the risk of premature death and disease increases to that of a smoker. On the flip side, regular activity not only improves fitness and health, but also increases our lifespan by about three to five years. The minimum activity level is walking (or a similar

activity) at a moderate pace for 30 minutes on most days. However, doing even more than this and including other types of exercise like strength training has extra health benefits. People with the highest levels of physical activity and fitness have the lowest risk of premature death and disease.

### How can I keep my brain sharp?

It's never too late to build additional brain reserves. Even in ageing adults, the brain can adapt to form new connections and generate new cells. A long-term commitment to keeping active – both mentally and physically – can delay the impacts of ageing on the brain and give us a good excuse to have fun! Keep challenging your brain – do crosswords and puzzles, learn to play bridge, read regularly, play word association games. Whatever mental activities you choose, keep your brain working on a daily basis.

### Does stress accelerate ageing?

Stress can be a killer. Even single periods of stress in our past can cast long shadows and may be associated with shorter life expectancy. Identifying the source of stress in our lives is the first step in controlling it. Write a journal and jot down what stresses you and what makes you feel good over a week or month. Take note and make changes to increase feelgood activities and to reduce stressful activities. Allocate time purely for relaxation, whether it be going for a walk or to the gym, salsa classes, gardening, or arranging a short getaway. Deep breathing, yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi and meditation also bolster stress resilience.



### Do good relationships play a part in longevity?

Social isolation can lead to mental stress, depression, decline and disease. Lonely hearts suffer twice as many heart attacks and are four times less likely to survive them. Cancer, stroke and other diseases are also more common in people with fewer social and personal connections. Put aside some time and energy to foster and maintain your key relationships. These connections offer health benefits that are at least as important as those that flow from adopting healthy diets. Better still, combine the two – share a slow meal with a loved one or take a long walk with a friend.

### How can I keep my skin looking youthful?

When we despair about the onset of lines, wrinkles and pigmentation, we need look no further than our time in the sun for its origins. Four out of five wrinkles, and most of the freckles on our faces, are due to sun exposure. Preventing sun damage with the use of broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF30+ sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats and protective clothing is the best way to slow skin ageing. Also, choose skin products high in antioxidants like coenzyme Q10 and polyphenols that reduce sun damage. A low-GI diet that's rich in vegetables, nuts, legumes and olive oil is also beneficial. ☺



**WIN!** We have 10 copies of *Fast Living Slow Ageing* by Kate Marie and Christopher Thomas to give away. To enter, tell us in 25 words or less why you'd like to win, include your contact details and send your completed entry to: *Good Health*, Fast Living Slow Ageing competition, ACP Magazines, GPO Box 4088, Sydney, NSW, 2000. This competition closes on March 3, 2010. See contents page for the location of our Privacy Notice. If you do not want your information provided to any organisation not associated with this promotion, please indicate this clearly on your entry. For full terms and conditions, visit [www.magshop.com.au/ghterms](http://www.magshop.com.au/ghterms).