

Getting Younger By The Hour

By [Troy Heie](#)

May 19, 2008 12:35 PM

Don't look now, but Dr. Daniel Laury is getting younger by the hour.

The Medford gynecologist and primary care physician for women says he's actually de-aging. That's based on a review of critical health markers that he says show "chronologically, if I go back a year on my numbers, I'm younger than a year ago.

"I'm more likely to live longer," says Laury, an expert in a field known as Life Extension.

He eats healthy foods, exercises and keeps his mind challenged, all somewhat simple steps to help the body and brain fight back against the march of time.

Exercise in general will reduce a lot of the markers of aging, Laury says, helping you feel younger and better.

The safest exercise is walking, followed by bicycling, yoga and swimming, he says. Laury notes that swimming is a good exercise, but it tends not to help people lose weight, which he concedes for some might not be a problem.

"The healthiest patients I have are multi-sport — yoga one day, walking the next, Pilates the next, then gardening, bicycling, running," he says. "If you're alternating your exercise, you're changing things. You're stimulating things. You're not getting stuck in a groove."

Along with the physical benefits of exercise — lower blood pressure, better lung function and stronger muscles — people who stay active physically also help their brain stay younger, Laury says.

"Exercise increases blood flow to the brain. The brain takes up 20 percent of your body's oxygen, and that's a lot when you consider it's just a spot on top of your shoulders," he says.

Mental exercise — like playing with a handheld video contraption or simply reading — also blaze pathways to a healthier, longer-lasting brain. You can even enjoy a game of bingo and give your mind a solid workout, Laury says.

"There is this suggestion you have to push yourselves, but really it happens even when you're socializing or interacting. Going out and playing bingo is better than sitting and watching TV or knitting."

Dr. Robin Miller, medical director of Triune Integrative Medicine in Medford, will join other experts this month at a symposium on optimal aging.

She says if people just use a little common sense in their lifestyle choices — eat right, exercise and don't smoke — they can likely live longer, more productive lives.

As an example of what to do, she points to the people of Okinawa, Japan, known for their longevity.

A new book, "The Blue Zone," written by Minnesota native Dan Buettner, addresses the aspects of living longer in places such as Okinawa, Sardinia, Costa Rica and even Loma Linda, Calif., east of Los Angeles.

The Okinawans are "eating under the 80 percent rule — meaning you never overeat. They're exercising; they have support systems; they have a positive outlook on life; they don't sweat the small stuff; they eat whole foods, like grains, fruits and vegetables; and they eat lean meats and a lot of fish," Miller says, citing Buettner's book.

"We all need to realize the bottom line is that it all goes back to the basics," she says.

Miller says she exercises every day ("The dogs make me go out at least twice a day"), meditates twice a day for at least 15 minutes and eats "as healthy as I can."

"I also try not to sweat the small stuff, but I have to work at that."

Miller, like Laury, says making exercise a normal part of your day can help your body function at its highest capacity. That doesn't mean you have to be in a gym, either.

If you have stairs in your workplace, take them every day, Miller says. Or park a block away from work, or even a mile away, and walk. "It matters," she says. "It definitely adds up."

Social support also is key to feeling younger, Miller and Laury note.

"It's important. People who lead isolated lives tend not to live as long," Miller says.

Miller's portion of the May 22 symposium focuses on "living to be 100."

"I don't know much that's going to happen here (in Oregon)," she warns. "Fifty percent of Oregonians are overweight or obese, so there's a lot of work to do."

When people do get motivated to exercise and clean up their unhealthy lifestyle, it pays off throughout the body, according to Harvard University professor and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder expert John Ratey.

His new book, "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain," makes the case that a fit body equals a fit mind.

Ratey's theory is simple: Humans evolved as physical creatures. When they're lulled into sedentary lives, their bodies — and their brains — get flabby from lack of physical exertion.

Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, can improve cognitive performance, soften the effects of stress, help fend off addiction-related cravings and tone down the negative consequences of women's hormonal changes. When it comes to psychiatric disorders, including ADHD, he calls exercise "one of the best treatments we have."

"The more complicated the exercise, the more challenging it is," Ratey said in an interview with the Washington Post. "You're challenging the learning and focusing parts of your brain as well as doing the aerobics. It optimizes the brain to learn. The ideal exercise plan would include both exercise that keeps you learning and (exercise that) keeps you moving — and keeps the challenge up.

"Challenge is something that we should all be striving for," he says. "It's the key to a long and healthy life."

FACT: A report from the University of California at Irvine suggests that docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), a type of omega-3

fatty acid, can interfere with some of the degenerative processes that characterize dementias such as Alzheimer's disease.

FACT:

The fear of decaying brains has inspired a mini-industry of brain health products — not just supplements like the coenzyme Q10, ginseng, ginkgo and bacopa, but computer-based fitter-brain products, as well.

By 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association, 11 million to 16 million Americans will have the disease.