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Healthy Behaviors Will Help You Live Longer: CDC
Don't smoke, eat healthy meals, exercise regularly and limit alcohol, researchers say

THURSDAY, Aug. 18 (HealthDay News) -- A healthy lifestyle helps you live longer, a new U.S. study confirms.

Researchers looked at long-term data from Americans aged 17 and older and found that those who embraced four healthy behaviors -- not smoking, eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity and avoiding excessive alcohol use -- were 63 percent less likely to die early from any cause than those with none of those healthy habits.

Not smoking offered the most protection from dying young.

Compared to those who didn't engage in any of the healthy behaviors, those who practiced all four healthy habits were 66 percent less likely to die early from cancer, 65 percent less likely to die early from cardiovascular disease, and 57 percent less likely to die early from other causes.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers said that 47.5 percent of the people in the study had never smoked, 51 percent were moderate drinkers (no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women), 40.2 percent got enough physical activity, and 39.3 percent had a healthy diet.

Rates of healthy behaviors were about the same for men and women. Mexican-Americans had more healthy behaviors than whites or blacks.

The findings are from an analysis of data in the CDC's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III Mortality Study, which included people recruited from 1988 to 1994 and followed through 2006.

The study is published online Aug. 18 in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

While studies show that only a small percentage of Americans have adopted all four of these healthy behaviors, the number of smokers has decreased significantly, the researchers noted in a CDC news release.

Health care providers and public health officials should encourage people to adopt these healthy behaviors, the researchers said.

More information

The American Academy of Family Physicians offers tips for [healthy children and families](#).

-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, news release, Aug. 18, 2011

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