



The middle of March and St. Patrick's Day makes me think of planting garden. Despite my husband's disability, he rototilled a bit of our garden so that we could plant sugar peas. He did this while I

was at the grocery store as he knew that I did not want him to try to handle the big rototiller. We planted three kinds of peas in a 100 foot row. All of these will need a six-foot fence for support. I save my own seed. Although, they are available to

the public through the "Heirloom Seed Project" at the Landis Valley Museum near Lancaster. My mother-in-law planted these kinds: "Risser Sickie pea and Risser Early Sugar Pea" in the 1920s.

My parents' farm was on the edge of a village. And, each spring we would see an elderly lady with a pan out in the field cutting dandelions. We thought she was a bit odd, but now I too look forward to cutting some tender dandelions for a salad. Many people add a hot bacon dressing but I like mine simply raw with a bit of mayonnaise and a hard boiled egg.

Now that spring is almost here, the pink geranium in a hanging basket has started to bloom again. It has seven big blooms which I enjoy looking at as it hangs in the big bay window. Even the impatiens plants, that I brought in in the fall, continue to bloom.

Recently, I spent another day of my life riding in a car. We drove to western Pennsylvania to visit my husband's brother. He recently moved to a Veterans Home in Holidaysburg. It is a large complex, and he was surprised to see us.

Possible To Age More Slowly?

Here, let me get that for you. Just sit and relax; I'll tend to everything. Take it easy; you shouldn't be straining yourself.

Such is the nature of the solicitous phrases often heard by those who are nearing or have reached retirement age.

There's a strong feeling in our culture that part of the proper way to show respect for the older members of society is to make sure they exert themselves as little as possible.

The golden years, to the American mind, are best spent sitting on porches sipping lemonade, not walking to town for a quart of milk, cleaning out the gutters, and using stairs rather than an elevator to climb a flight or two.

But it's apparently that very attitude that helps make older folks, well, old. The less physically active people become as they advance in years, the faster their bodies give out on them. That's the conclusion from a team of scientists at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University.

Dr. William Evans, chief of the Center's Human Physiology and Laboratory, and Dr. Irwin Rosenberg, director of the center, report that while inactivity doesn't necessarily shorten the life span, it most definitely shortens the health span. That is, a decrease in physical exertion makes people less capable of doing things for themselves at a younger age than necessary. It also makes them more prone to such illnesses as heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis, so that the last 20 to 30 to 40 years of their lives are often unduly compromised by a combination of bodily complaints and dependency on others.

Conversely, those over 45 who continue to push themselves physically as the years go by have a much better chance of maintaining their vigor, stamina, and physical flexibility as well as overall health and therefore of reaching and living through old age self-reliant. They can take out their own trash, walk a mile to the senior citizens center rather than be driven, and carry the laundry

down to and up from the basement without feeling winded. It's true not only for those in their 60s and 70s but even for many in their 80s and 90s. Better still, those in their golden years who have lost a good deal of physical capacity can retard and even reverse the trend. Even if you're already 75 years old, the researchers say, feel overburdened with aches and pains, and have long since accepted the idea that an energetic lifestyle is over for you, you can still turn things around. They cite evidence of men in their 70s who within 12 weeks' time went from being able to lift 44 pounds to 85 pounds, losing fat and gaining muscle. In just eight weeks, women in their 90s nearly tripled their strength! How?

With exercise. With huffing and puffing and working up a sweat, and with lifting weights.

The idea of an octogenarian or nonagenarian working out to the point of perspiring might sound very distasteful, very punishing, and perhaps even dangerous. But it's just that level of exertion that keeps aging from being synonymous with illness and proves that chronological age, marked by the number of years lived, is distinct from biological age, marked by the body's capacity.

Consider the comment of a 93-year-old woman who completed the researchers' strength-training program: "I feel as if I were 50 again. Now I get up in the middle of the night and can get around without using my walker or turning on the light."

Or the words of a 58-year-old: "As I moved into my 50s, my body felt more and more like a dead weight. I simply accepted it as part of growing older. How wonderful to discover this isn't the way I have to feel at my age—to know that, by working at it, I can actually feel better and more ready for life than I did when I was 22."

Drs. Evans and Rosenberg detail their energy-enhancing exercise plan, which they couple with sound nutrition, in their newly released book, Biomarkers: The 10 Determinants of Aging You Can Control (Simon & Schuster: New York, \$21.95).

The biomarkers are actually key physiological factors that are associated with aging but which regular exercise and a prudent diet can keep in as tip-top shape as possible for as long as possible.

In the 10 Biomarkers: Keeping Them 'Young,' famous baseball pitcher Leroy "Satchel" Paige never knew exactly how old he was. He told people to use his performance on the pitcher's mound to estimate his age. But that did little good, since he was a leading pitcher for about 25 years, from the 1920s into the 1950s. What that probably means is that his biomarkers remained "young" even as he grew older because he was so active. The 10 biomarkers Drs. Evans and Rosenberg have pinpointed include the following: 1. muscle 2. strength mass 3. basal metabolic rate 4. body fat percentage 5. aerobic capacity 6. blood-sugar tolerance 7. cholesterol/HDL ratio 8. blood pressure 9. bone density 10. the body's ability to regulate its internal temperature.

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(Adapted from a quiz by Dr. Eigi Noguchi)

Check all the boxes which apply to you -

- I wake up tired, even after eight hours of sleep
- I sleep restlessly, waking up frequently
- I suffer from chronic fatigue
- I have poor physical endurance
- I tend to be moody and irritable
- I am susceptible to colds and flu
- I suffer from allergies
- I frequently feel tense and on edge
- I am frequently constipated
- I have frequent pain in my shoulder and/or back
- I have weight problems
- I crave sweets, alcohol or soda

If you checked more than three boxes, your body might not be assimilating sufficient oxygen. Please consult your physician. You may wish to have your blood oxygen levels tested - before and after you begin to use the Chi Machine.

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How do I use my Chi Machine?

- * Place the machine on a rug. Lie on your back and put your ankles in the grooves of the footrest on top of the machine.
- * Set the timer switch to activate the machine for the number of minutes you desire. First time users should start with 2-5 minutes.
- * The footrest will begin to move back and forth, carrying your feet briskly from side to side. This movement will carry up through your legs and torso, throughout your entire body, causing you to wiggle back and forth - that's right like a fish swimming in water.
- * All you do now is relax and breathe deeply, letting the machine rock you gently but firmly for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- * When the time is up and the machine stops, remain lying down for another two to five minutes, relaxing and breathing deeply, enjoying the remarkable afterglow - chi - as it moves throughout your body.

"In only three weeks of using the Chi Machine, I lost 15 pounds effortlessly - and hospital lab tests showed that my blood cholesterol level dropped from 225 to 160 mg"

"In two months of using the Chi Machine, my thighs, hips, stomach and buttocks now look as good as they did when I was in my 20's - and I'm almost 52"