

Going the distance

Americans living to be older than ever before

(ARA) - Boomers can take heart in some surprising news released in recent weeks by Eons.com about the longevity of 50-plus Americans. Their research, which examined the projected lifespan of Americans who have already celebrated their 50th birthday, showed that the roughly 450,000 people who completed the Eons Longevity Calculator will live to age 90 or more.

That's good news for those who've bought into other statistics that place the average life expectancy in the 70s.

What makes the results of Eons Longevity Calculator different is that only Americans who have already passed the 50-year mark were studied, meaning they've survived the childhood accidents and diseases and the early onset forms of cancer, heart disease and other ailments that can shorten lives.

Developed by Dr. Tom Perls, a longevity expert for Eons and founder and director of Boston University's New England Centenarian Study — the world's largest study of people over the age of 100 — the Eons Longevity Calculator comprises 40 short questions about health, history, attitudes and behaviors. Visitors over the age of 50 to Eons.com can take the Longevity Calculator and, in about 10 minutes, discover their projected age.

While sifting through the results of the 450,000 completed questionnaires, Dr. Perls uncovered some interesting trends by state. For instance, Hawaiians 50-plus



will, on average, live longer than residents of any other state, 92 years. Residents of Colorado and New Mexico were close behind. On the other end of the calculated longevity spectrum, 50-plus West Virginians are statistically likely to live the shortest lives, about 89 years.

"Even in states that didn't rank at the top for longevity, I think a lot of people will be surprised when they take the Longevity Calculator themselves and find that they are likely to live many more years than they expected," Dr. Perls says.

"Once people know their bodies are well enough to live healthy lives into their 80s, 90s and beyond, they can start to think differently about how they want to enjoy those many vibrant years ahead, what they want to accomplish, and how they should manage their retirement finances," Perls says.

The Longevity Calculator is one of the most popular features on Eons.com, the 50-plus Web destination that is the brainchild of Jeff Taylor. Taylor, who previously founded the online career site Monster.com,

says, "Baby boomers are going to live, on average, 20 years longer than their grandparents did. But living well — not just living long — is crucial. Our 50-plus Longevity Calculator is a catalyst for this, providing users with some very simple steps that can make a real difference in the ultimate length and quality of their lives."

No matter what a person's calculated longevity is, Dr. Perls suggests a number of ways that people can add real years to their lives.

* **Change Your Attitude** — Add 5 years: Maintaining a stress-free, optimistic outlook on life can have more longevity benefits than you think. By staying positive and not dwelling on negative aspects of your life, you can add five years to your life.

* **Exercise** — Add up to 10 years: Everyone understands the benefits of exercise, but its relationship to longevity is largely overlooked. By maintaining a modest but steady exercise regimen of at least 30 minutes a day, four days a week, a person can add 10 years to their life and enjoy a fit physique.

* **Eat Healthier** — Add 7

years: Similar to exercise, a well-balanced, healthy diet can have a dramatic impact on longevity. By incorporating plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish and lean meat, while limiting trans fats and simple carbohydrates, the average American can add 7 years to their life.

* **Put Out That Cigarette**



— Smoking can subtract 15 years: Even if illnesses related to smoking — lung cancer, mouth cancer and emphysema — don't send you to an early grave, a life of smoking can still shorten your life span by up to 15 years.

* **Train Your Brain** — Add 5 years: New studies by Dr. Perls have shown that the

strength and vitality of your brain have a direct correlation to the strength and longevity of your body. By engaging in sustained and challenging brain activity, a person can add five years to their life. This can be achieved by simply playing games like Sudoku or crossword puzzles for 20 minutes a day.

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