

# Characteristics of American Centenarians

A group of more than 100 centenarians living within an eight-town radius of Boston, were the subjects of a study initiated in 1994.

The co-directors of the New England Centenarian Study (NECS)- Thomas Perls, M.D., ., and Margery Hutter Silver, published their observations in the medical literature and in a popular book titled *Living to 100: Lessons in Living to Your Maximum Potential at Any Age* (Basic Books).

You can see some of the important characteristics they share below:

1. Significant obesity is rare.
2. Smoking history is extremely rare.
3. They score low in a type of personality testing that measures neuroticism (based on a preliminary study). A lack of neuroticism translates into not dwelling on problems and therefore managing stress well.
4. They have a history of showing signs of aging very slowly and markedly delaying or even escaping age-associated diseases, such as heart attack, stroke, cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease.
5. Many children of these centenarians (age range of 65 to 82) appear to be following in their parents' footsteps.

## **Diet and Longevity**

According to *Longevity: Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide* ( Books), eating certain foods can add years to your life:

**Garlic** detoxifies the body of heavy metals, reduces cholesterol, decreases blood pressure and acts as an antibiotic.

**Soy** decreases cholesterol, boosts thyroid hormone levels,

reduces cancer risks and promotes good bacteria growth.

**Citrus** Fresh-squeezed juice prevents abnormal blood clots, lowers blood pressure and reduces cholesterol.

**Nuts** are high in the good type of fat and lower the incidence of heart attacks.

**Mushrooms** Shiitake enhances immune system function, fights infection and cancer; Reishi lowers blood pressure and cholesterol; Maitake lowers blood pressure and may help control diabetes.

**Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens and others)** regulate white blood cells and activate liver detoxification enzymes. Legumes (peas and beans) are effective at reducing cholesterol levels and help fight diabetes, heart attack and stroke.

**Seafood (salmon and cold-water fish)** is high in omega-3 fatty acid, lowers bad cholesterol, raises good cholesterol and reduces blood clotting.

**Yogurt** The friendly bacteria in yogurt protects against carcinogens, reduces cholesterol, controls yeast infections, alleviates diarrhea and helps with constipation.

**Spices (curry powder, turmeric, ginger, cayenne pepper, sage, thyme and rosemary)** are anti-cancer, immune-stimulating, antioxidant, cholesterol-lowering and exhibit a multitude of health-enhancing effects.

Whether or not your family history predisposes you to live a long time, you'll still need to make good lifestyle choices regarding your physical, spiritual and emotional health. You will be rewarded with improved prospects for longevity, as well as greater peace and productivity.