

# Can people live to age of 200?

Dear Jo:  
I have a couple of questions for you. The first — what is the difference between the term life expectancy and life span. The second — do gerontologists envision man living for say — 200 years or more.

Mr. F.D.,  
Faithful Reader

Dear Mr. D:  
The terms differ.  
Life expectancy refers to the average number of years of life expected for an individual in a given population.

Life span is the maximum number of years of life possible for a species. Your second question is quite thought provoking. Researchers in fields related to gerontology have found ways to increase both the life expectancy and life span in animals. But, so far, with humans it is somewhat different. There has been a great deal of success in the last hundred years in increasing the life expectancy of people living in developed countries such as ours. The credit goes to major improvements in nutrition,

health care, sanitation and housing. Life expectancy has risen from 46 to 74 years for males and from 48 to 78 for females since the turn of the century. More people are living to old age now than ever before in recorded history.

The life span for humans has remained fixed at about 115 years for all or recorded history. Although the prospect of increasing the life span of humans is exciting, I doubt if we will see it change in our lifetime.

The present focus of aging research is directed toward the prevention and treatment of disease and health promotion and maintenance so that the quality of life will improve for all members of society.

Dear Jo:  
I am 76 years old and live on my own. I don't mind my age except for a few "little" inconveniences I have. For example, I seem to always have a dry mouth. Is this just something we have to put up with when we get old?

## Volunteers are needed

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Call Laurie Kattuah, 271-3050, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Downtown YMCA, 2230 Witherell, Detroit, needs volunteers, 15 and older, for flexible commitments between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Depending upon activity selected, certification or experience is needed. For information, call Vanessa Brooks, 961-9220, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.  
For information on other opportunities or if your organization needs volunteers, call The Center for Volunteerism, United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, 222-9420 weekdays, or write 1212 Griswold, Detroit 48226-1899.

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gerontology  
**A. Jolayne Farrell**  
Mrs. E.B.,  
Michigan Senior Citizen

Dear Mrs. B.:  
With aging there is a slight decrease in the production of saliva. The amount of dryness is usually negligible and more older people do not find it a problem.

A dry mouth becomes a problem when it's associated with the taking of both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. More than 200 medications, including antihistamines, decongestants, diuretics and drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease, ulcers and cancer can cause a dry mouth.

Other causes of the problem are smoking, drinking alcoholic and caffeinated beverages and eating spicy foods.

You should discuss your concern with both your doctor and your dentist because treatment of a dry mouth depends on the cause. The treatment may be as simple as increasing your daily water consumption or using an oral rinse regularly. Sometimes an artificial saliva is prescribed.

Saliva is essential for good oral health. Neglecting a dry mouth can lead to oral tissue breakdown, tooth decay, gum disease and poor fitting dentures.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4E 1J3.

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# Which first aid supplies to pack

Q. Our family is heading out West on vacation next. What first aid supplies should we pack to insure a hassle-free trip?

A. Planning ahead for "emergencies" does help to reduce the hassle and frustration later on.

No matter what type of vacation you've planned, it's smart to have at the top of your "take-with" list a first-aid kit or, better yet, a selection of medical supplies and medicines to meet your family's routine and emergency needs.

While this may seem like unnecessary baggage, even the most sophisticated city may not have a drug store near your hotel or one that's open 24 hours for midnight emergencies. Isn't that when all emergencies happen?

What you include in your family's medical kit will depend on who your travelers are, where you're going and length of stay. There are differ-

ent needs for teenagers and senior citizens or visiting Washington, D.C., and camping in an isolated woods.

**SOME BASIC items** for all travelers include:

- Cotton balls.
- Gauze pads (2 x 2 & 4 x 4 inches).
- Adhesive bandages, assorted sizes.
- Adhesive tape.
- Scissors.
- Safety pins.
- Tweezers.
- Roll of 1-inch wide gauze.
- Elastic bandage.
- Alcohol wipes.
- Thermometer.

Some over-the-counter medications to include are:

- Pain reliever, aspirin or non-aspirin type.
- Antimicrobial skin ointment.
- Cough, cold medicine.

**Terry Glibb**

• Mild laxative.  
• Antacid.  
SUNSCREENS are a must for all outdoor vacation plans. A long line at an amusement park has produced as severe a sunburn as a day at the beach.

Lip balm will help prevent wind or sun lip chapping and insect repellents are important because pesky bugs are not found just in the woods, but at roadside parks and picnic areas as well.

Your family's travel kit should also include a fresh supply of any prescription medicines taken routinely by family members. Pack some extra in case your return is delayed beyond the expected date.

An antihistamine should also be among the drugs in the medical kit. A suggested form is diphenhydramine because it can serve as an anti-allergy medication as well as a motion-sickness remedy and sleeping aid.

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