

Blue Zones – where people live to be 100+

The places in the world where people live longer and healthier than anywhere else on earth have been named Blue Zones. In each of these places people living to 90 or even 100 years is common. They are not just living longer either – they are living healthier - without medication or disability.

With their strikingly high concentrations of individuals who live to be over 100 years old, Blue Zones include the following regions:

Ikaria in Greece;

Okinawa in Japan;

Watch this video about blue zoners of Okinawa by clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwd-Y4z05AE>

The province of Ogliastra in Sardinia, Italy;

The community of Seventh-Day Adventists in Loma Linda, California;

Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula.

The term Blue Zone first appeared in the November 2005 "National Geographic magazine cover story, "The Secrets of a Long Life" by Dan Buettner. Dan Buettner is an American National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author.

In 2004 Buettner, together with teams of anthropologists, demographers, epidemiologists and other researchers, travelled around the world to study communities with surprisingly high percentages of centenarians. He and the scientists interviewed hundreds of people who had made it to age 100 to find out about how they lived, and with the collected data tried to figure out what blue zoners had in common. He has put the researched information into his book called "The Blue Zone Solution".

According to Buettner, the traditional diets of people of the Blue Zones date back to an era before people's diets were overtaken by greasy fast food and sugar. And to qualify as a Blue Zone, these communities also have to be largely free of afflictions like heart disease, obesity, cancer and diabetes. So clearly they are doing something right.

And What is the Secret of this Healthy Longevity?

The secret is lifestyle. The people here live a lifestyle that includes a healthy diet, daily exercise, and a low stress life that incorporates family, purpose, religion, and meaning. People in Blue Zones eat healthy diets, and not surprisingly they suffer less frequently from major diseases than other populations. They live longer and healthier. In Blue Zone Ikaria the people suffer from one half the rate of heart disease and 20% less cancer than Americans and there are more healthy people over 90 than anywhere else in the world. The people in Blue Zones do not need to artificially incorporate exercise into their lives with machines. The exercise comes for free, already built naturally into their daily lives. The people climb mountains, walk through the hills, work the land, and generally use their bodies in a constant grind as they perform their daily activities. And it doesn't have to be high intensity "run as fast as you can" exercise either. Often the exercise is slow and relaxed, but ongoing throughout the day. These people are using their muscles, burning calories, and circulating their blood. Their bodies are tough and healthy, conditioned by the daily routine

to be fit and alert, ready to fight disease; quick to break down toxins and waste. The people who live in the Blue Zones have social circles that reinforce healthy behaviours. They take time to de-stress. They are part of communities, often religious ones, with their families that are committed to them.

What they put in their mouths, how much and when, is worth a closer look.

Longevity Diets of the Blue Zones



In Nicoya, Costa Rica, where there is the lowest rate of middle age mortality, 70% of the inhabitants' diet consists of beans, squash and corn tortillas. The combination of these foods have complete proteins and contain all nine essential amino acids.

In Okinawa, Japan, where the longest living women on earth reside—an average of 90 years old—60% of their diet consists of sweet potato. Sweet potato is high in “beta carotene” a source of Vitamin A and it's also packed with antioxidants as well.

In Sardinia, Italy, where the longest living men on earth reside, men drink up to 1-2 glasses a day of Cannonau Wine. The antioxidants and flavonoids within the wine may help promote their heart health.

In Loma Linda, California, the Seventh Day Adventists eat a “biblical diet” which consists of slow-cooked oatmeal, beans and nuts. These food items are high in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants which may help in reducing risk factors for heart disease.

Here is a video about a typical blue zoner diet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtHRwq5Um0>

To sum up the research about blue zoners, here are tips about their lifestyle that are worth following:

95% of your food items should be plant-based.

Stop eating when 80% full to avoid weight gain

Eat a half cup of beans daily.

Eat your largest meal at breakfast and smallest at dinner.

Eat the smallest meal of the day in the late afternoon or evening.

Snack on a handful of nuts daily.

Cook majority of your meals at home.

Drink alcohol moderately and regularly, i.e. 1-2 glasses a day.

Genetic studies of longevity suggest that about a third of the variation in longevity among people is attributable to their genes, and the rest is influenced by environmental factors. There is not much we ourselves can do about the genes we inherit. However, we certainly have a lot more control over the environmental factors that impact upon our longevity – not just longevity, but longevity that comes with good health and fitness.

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