Back pain: To live longer don't do extreme exercise

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Extending life expectancy depends on multiple factors. Some can be controlled, through good habits, hence the importance of identifying and applying them. One of the world's top longevity experts, Dan Buettner, recommends some clear ones based on his own studies and research. The journalist, writer and researcher has dedicated more than 20 years to studying the so-called 'Blue Zones', the regions of the world with the highest life expectancy.

Dan Buettner, longevity expert: "People who live longer don't do extreme exercise, they just move"
The professional defends that the daily natural movement is the secret of centenarians.

Integrating exercise naturally is key. / Midjourney - A woman, walking

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Extending life expectancy depends on multiple factors. Some can be controlled, through good habits, hence the importance of identifying and applying them. One of the world's top longevity experts, Dan Buettner, recommends some clear ones based on his own studies and research. The journalist, writer and researcher has dedicated more than 20

years to studying the so-called 'Blue Zones', the regions of the world with the highest life expectancy.

He drew several remarkable and surprising conclusions. One of the most important is related to physical exercise. According to the expert, the intensity of physical training is not the decisive element to live longer. "People who live longer don't exercise, at least not as we understand it today: they don't do pilates, they don't do crossfit, they don't train in gyms," explained the professional. What exactly does it refer to and what is the best alternative to achieve it?

A constant but moderate intensity

Walking is one of the most effective and practical exercises on a day-to-day basis. / Midjourney
In his work, Buettner defends the natural integration of movement into the daily routine. He explains that it is about adopting a lifestyle based on mobility, without necessarily extreme effort. "That's not going to help us in the long run. Ultramarathons and very demanding workouts shorten our lives. They increase inflammation, there is a risk of damaging our joints and not being able to walk. There is even evidence that marathon runners have calcified arteries," clarifies the expert.

In the 'Blue Zones', the inhabitants only follow a rhythm of life naturally based on moving. They walk long distances, work their gardens, tend their houses, and perform various household chores by themselves. The professional points out that they move approximately every 20 minutes, which has numerous benefits: it keeps their metabolism active and improves their cardiovascular system.

"Instead of exercising for the sake of it, try making lifestyle changes. Ride your bike instead of driving, walk to the store instead of driving, and take the stairs instead of the elevator. Incorporate movement into your lifestyle. Chances are, you'll maintain that behavior for much longer. And that's what it's all about: maintaining it," the expert clarifies.

Embracing these changes, which account for 75% of our longevity versus 25% genetic, are essential to reducing biological age and anticipating long-term health risks

Beyond the natural integration of exercise into everyday life, the professional points out several key factors to promote longevity. Among them, the creation of strong social relationships ("multigenerational households, shared meals and deep connections over decades create innate purpose, care and joy, longevity is not just about habits, but about who you share life with", he points out in this regard), moderate alcohol consumption and a restful sleep of at least six hours.

Diet is also a factor to consider. In this sense, the expert recommends foods "rich in fiber, vegetable proteins and minerals, as they stabilize blood sugar, feed your gut microbiome, reduce cholesterol and keep you satiated for longer. Eat them daily — lentils, black beans, chickpeas or white beans — and cover heart health, digestion and longevity with just one simple food."

Regarding the foods to avoid, he is blunt: "These four should never come through your door: processed meats, sugary drinks, salty snacks and packaged sweets. And stop snacking between meals. You don't need constant 'boosters' of protein, fiber or supplements. In the 'Blue Zones', people eat a hearty breakfast, a moderate lunch and a light dinner, then give their digestive system a 14-hour night's rest and real breaks between meals. Less snacking, more rhythm. Simple works," explains the professional.

These guidelines are not only key to promoting longevity, but also to achieving more happiness. As Dan Buettner concludes, when people move to places that naturally propel them toward movement, connection, purpose, and reciprocity, happiness can double in record time. Sometimes the quickest mindset change is a change in location. Take note.