

Simple Tips for Longer Living

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Understanding the human body and food's effects on it over long periods of time is hard. Counting, by contrast, is easy. This, at least, is the premise behind the Nurses Health Study, a multi-decade project by Harvard to gather empirical information about nutrition. The idea behind the study is simple: collect a reasonably large group of people all in a rather similar situation (nurses) and have them fill out a yearly survey with two questions: "what did you eat?" and "are you dead yet?" They've been doing this since 1976.

Then you simply punch the information into a computer and figure out what foods kill people. The results, as described in the associated book *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy* provide some simple tips for living longer.

Replace white bread with whole wheat. White bread is simply whole wheat bread shorn of all its nutritional value. Whole wheat has more nutrients, more protein, etc. Plus, white bread is metabolized quickly by your body so it leads to huge spikes in blood sugar which have unhealthy effects on your body and make you hungry after you crash; whole wheat bread is digested more evenly.

Replace burgers with chicken. Dark meat when grilled can lead to potential carcinogens, whereas white meat is overall healthier. Chicken contains less saturated (bad) fat while dark meat may give you too much iron.

Replace soft drinks with water. These results [are from the same study](#) but weren't featured in the book. Drinking a soda makes you 85% more likely to develop diabetes and can cause you to gain up to ten pounds. "It's probably that high amounts of sugar in the bloodstream put an increased demand for insulin on the pancreas," the study's author explains.

I'm about the fussiest eater I know and even I can handle these changes. Whole wheat bread even tastes better than white.

Disclaimer: I know nothing about nutrition, this is simply what I took away from reading one book.