

HOW TO AGE WELL

by

Wies Verbeek



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Synopsis

If anyone knows how to age a little nicely, it is Wies Verbeek. As a healthy aging journalist, she interviewed more than 80 scientists and health experts with questions such as: why do we sleep less well as we get older? And how can we improve that sleep? How do you keep your brain healthy for as long as possible? What really works to keep your body toned? Which exercise is best for your bones? Can hormone supplementation contribute to a better sex life? She also immersed herself in the professional literature. The very best tips she picked up over the years have been compiled in this book, often accompanied by her own experiences.

HOW TO AGE WELL is an accessible book full of practical tips and tricks on nutrition, mind, hormones, exercise, appearance and more. All based on the idea: little effort, big results. An absolute must-read and a perfect gift for anyone who wants to grow old healthy, fit and happy.



WIES VERBEEK (b. 1964) is a journalist specialising in the subject of healthy aging. She has years of experience in the magazine business, especially at Libelle, Margriet, Marie Claire and Nouveau. As a journalist she specializes in the subject of healthy aging. She is the founder of the platform BLOW, has made podcasts with presenter Jaap Jongbloed, and regularly makes presentations and holds workshops, always on subjects relating to a long life of happiness, health and fitness. She is also

founder of the platform BLOW ('n Beetje Leuk Ouder Worden) for which she blogs and vlogs about topics related to a long, happy, healthy and fit life. On the same topics, she makes podcasts and gives workshops and presentations.

Books on healthy fit and happy ageing abound. This has everything to do with the fact that we are getting older and older and we would like to stay physically and mentally fit for as long as possible. Usually, these books are written by scientists or ageing experts and explain a lot about the how and why of physical processes or ageing theories. This can make the reader feel like they are dealing with a textbook, having to wade through a lot of information. Also, many healthy aging books only address one lifestyle factor such as 'Sleep better' or 'Eat healthier' or 'Stress less'.

What makes Wies Verbeek's book so unique is that she herself is a layperson and, like everyone else, would like to know what you can best do to age beautifully, fit and enjoyably. Whether it's food supplements or your brain, bones or your mental well-being. She has reduced all the scientific information around ageing to practical and surprising tips. So as a reader, you no longer have to do your own research, but only follow the tips that appeal to

you. The author alternates the tips and facts with her own experiences, which show a disarming honesty. What makes the book such a success in the Netherlands is that readers like the fact that everything is down to earth and they can easily fit the tips into everyday life. The writing style is accessible and catchy. You want to take action right away.

Reviews from readers:

' A must-read for the ageing person!'

'HOW TO AGE WELL gives you tools to easily and effectively make small changes in your lifestyle. It is a book you can pick up again and again to adopt another small habit. The tips are easy and surprising. Where necessary, Verbeek refers to reliable (online) tests, websites and organisations for more information. So you don't have to go looking for it yourself, handy. Want to know why jumping rope every day is good for your bones? Why you should brush your teeth on one leg? Why you should never actually retire and swear off your lines? Then by all means read this book.'

'Book reads nicely. You can hook in anywhere if you want. Book is packed with useful tips with scientific backing'

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Thank you

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A good start

Humans are creatures of habit. We get up in the morning, go shower, feed the dog, grab a bowl of yoghurt and may or may not put honey in it, without having to think about all these actions. Once these habits have ingrained. In the same way, you can learn healthy habits, or unlearn unhealthy habits. It's probably all obvious, but apply it for real. It works.

Think about omitting the sugar cube in your coffee. Before, you didn't have to think about it, now you don't know any better. Similarly, you can start with things like 'not eating anything after dinner', eating 300 grams of vegetables a day when you are used to 100 grams, or cycling to the office instead of going by car. No more working after 7pm. It sounds too trite for words, but scientific research shows that small adjustments are much more likely to succeed than big ones.

Start with something that takes the least effort. Once it's ingrained, you can start again with something new. What also works well is linking new behavioural habits to habits you already have. For example doing a few squats before brushing your teeth. It takes between ten days and two years, depending on how deep-rooted a particular habit is, until you unlearn something or learn something new. Flossing, for example, will be much easier than going for a walk before breakfast. When the first new behaviour has become a habit, you pick up the second, and so you start stacking. It doesn't matter if you want to lose weight, sleep more, become more positive or want to work on your work-life balance, it's all in those small steps. American behavioural scientist Robert Maurer wrote a fantastic book about these small habit adjustments.



The Art of Kaizen: taking small steps towards big goals

This book by Robert Maurer is packed with examples. Kaizen is a Japanese word that means that to improve you need to take small steps. The art of Kaizen is now a widely used method in organisations and companies to bring about change achieve. This is how you can look at the tips and facts in this book. Small effort, big result. Start with the tips that you like most and that you can integrate most easily into your daily life. To get you started, here is a mix of tips that everyone can benefit from. Use them to your advantage.



Turn down the heating

Gas shortages, skyrocketing energy prices, the climate, those are all good reasons to turn down the heating. But there is another reason that is important: being cold once in a while is good for your health and weight. We are used to cranking up the stove as soon as it gets chilly outside. All very cosy, but so the body doesn't have to do anything to get warm, whereas it is good that it has to regulate the temperature itself. Research shows that around 1870 a temperature of 13 to 15 degrees was perceived as comfortable. So apparently we can keep ourselves well warm even at low temperatures. Now the system seems to be a bit flat, but our own heat production can be properly activated and results in all kinds of positive effects.

Here's the thing. When it's cold, your muscles contract and you shiver (even without you noticing it clearly). As a result, just like in sports, your metabolism goes into higher gear and this makes you feel warmer. Not only muscles play a role, we also need brown fat to warm up. This is the healthy fat that surrounds important places in the body such as the heart, arteries and the nervous system. Brown fat cells produce 300 times more heat than other body tissues. But yes, if you don't get cold very often you are, that brown fat will not be drawn on and you will lose it. By regularly exposing yourself to lower temperatures, you produce more brown fat, you are better able to keep yourself warm and burn more you burn more calories.

Professor Dr Wouter van Marken Lichtenbelt, professor of ecological energetics and health at Maastricht University, has been researching for years how a warm or cold environment affects the metabolism. He advocates lower indoor temperatures in winter. He has shown through research that lower temperatures not only increases energy consumption of the body, but also has a positive effect on blood flow, cardiovascular function and improves sugar metabolism. His advice in winter is to let the temperature inside vary between 17 and 20 degrees and dress slightly less warm outdoors from time to time. As early as 18 degrees more brown fat is produced. In summer, it is okay to be much warmer. Because then the body also has to work.

Easy relaxation with Jacobson

Stress is not good, stress is not nice. Besides, it also makes you age faster. For those who find it hard to relax, the practicing Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation' is definitely worth trying. Find out exactly how it works on page 137.

Sprinkling with potassium

Good for blood pressure: potassium. By replacing ordinary table salt with potassium salt you not only increase your potassium intake, but also reduce your salt intake. Want to know more? Then scroll quickly to page 50.



Get out in the sun without sunscreen

'Watch out for sunlight! Protect your skin from cancer and other skin damage!' You would be shocked by all the warnings to avoid the sun and not go out again until you have triple-coated yourself with factor 30. Yet it's very important to take a few minutes unprotected in the sun every day. Even the Ministry of Health advises it. The advice has everything to do with vitamin D, which is produced in the skin under the influence of sunlight, a process that is stopped by sunscreen.

Vitamin D has all sorts of health-promoting effects, but is especially important to combat inflammatory diseases. Immunologist Huub Savelkoul, professor at Wageningen University - who, among other things, campaigned for more vitamin D supplementation in times of covid because it reduces the chances of getting of the disease - stresses the importance of the sun. 'Ninety per cent of the vitamin D you need comes through the sun. Without sunlight you will never get the amount of vitamin D you need, no matter how healthy you eat and how many vitamin D pills you take. Twice a day for half an hour with bare hands and uncovered face walking outside without sun protection is therefore advisable. Especially for people with dark skin. If the area of skin that is exposed is bigger, then less time will suffice. Also, the higher the intensity of the sun, which is especially in the afternoon and in summer, the less time you need to be outside. In winter, the quality of UV radiation is too low to make enough make vitamin D. Then supplementation is necessary. So the sun is extremely important, but you have to prevent sunburn. Being in the sun a lot means always applying a good lubricant.'

How big an impact the sun has on our health also shows a Swedish study among 29,000 women. Women who regularly sunbathe were found to live longer than women who avoided the sun, despite having an increased risk of skin cancer. The women who do not or rarely get in the sun were found to be more likely to suffer from diabetes and thrombosis and are more

likely to have cardiovascular diseases. The researchers suspect that the result has to do with a higher production of vitamin D, but it could also be caused by other unknown positive factors of the sun.

Measuring your health with an app

Health apps, there are thousands of them. Apps to keep track of your heart rate, to know if you are getting enough protein, to find out if you need to see a doctor, that help you relax and so on. But which ones are good and reliable? There is a handy link for that. Check it out from page 38 onwards.



Breathe through your nose

How are you breathing right now? Through your mouth or through your nose? And at night when you sleep? You may not be aware of it, but the way you breathe greatly affects your health. US science journalist James Nestor spoke to scientists, yoga gurus and breathing experts, scoured hundreds of major studies and conducted experiments himself, and showed in his book *The New Breathing* how great the benefits of nose breathing are over mouth breathing. Breathing through the nose not only allows you to take in more oxygen, which benefits the whole body, it also supports the immune system, significantly reduces the risk of apnoea and snoring, provides the right energy balance, stimulates brain functions that are involved in emotions and recalling memories and is better for your teeth than oral breathing. To put it to the test Nestor himself plugged up his nose for ten weeks so that he had to breathe through his mouth. In the meantime, he performed measurements. After ten days, his stress hormones had skyrocketed, his nose had become infected with a bacterium and his blood pressure had risen sharply. He developed sleep apnoea, resulting in fatigue and irritability as a result. After his experiment he closed his mouth with tape at night and all symptoms disappeared again. So you really can benefit a lot from nasal breathing.

Now just do it. Constantly focusing on your breathing will drive crazy, but if you find yourself breathing through your mouth for long periods, it's good to see how you can change it. Nose breathing you can teach yourself, even if it is sometimes difficult because breathing is so automatic. As a reminder, you can stick notes on your laptop or other things. If you have trouble with nasal breathing you might want to have it looked at by a doctor. There could be something wrong with your nasal septum, for example. Learning to breathe through your nose at night when you are not used to doing so is a lot more difficult. Mouth breathing can be recognised by snoring, dry mouth, bad sleep or bad breath. If this is the case, you will need to try different means. Consider taping your mouth by using mouth or sleep tape, or nose spreaders that make the nose-breathing easier. All can be ordered on the internet. There are even special headbands that you put around your chin so that you can't open your

mouth. Maybe the person sleeping next to you will be happy with that anyway. Training with nose breathing during the day also makes it better at night.

Chicory keeps gut bacteria healthy

Guts have been called our second brain. And if anything is good for your gut bacteria, it's chicory. It is packed with prebiotics, the nutrients that support the growth and activity of the good lactic acid bacteria (probiotics) in your gut. On page 95 you can read all about this wonder vegetable.

Wake up without wrinkles

Who doesn't know them, the wonderful stories about satin and silk pillowcases? They are said to protect your skin from moisture loss and prevent wrinkles. Yep, can you try it yourself. A silk pillowcase does prevent you from walking around with sleep wrinkles in your face. Ideal if you sleep with your whole face pressed into your pillow to sleep. It saves a lot of creases in the morning. Buy a hundred per cent silk pillowcase and not satin. On page 174 you can read why.