

Your Expanded Lifespan

How long are you and I going to live? None of us knows, of course, but this number is important for a variety of planning issues—including, of course, how long your money will have to last in retirement. Actuarial tables tell us how long people will live on average, but that isn't much help for planning a specific person's life, and the averages conceal a lot of variation.

Living today is a huge advantage over living in the past, and living in a developed nation is a benefit as well. Most children born in the late 1700s had a life expectancy below age 35; today, the global average is 70, and people who make it to age 65 have a good chance of living to 85 or longer.

If you're above the national average in wealth and income, and especially if you have certain lifestyle characteristics like regular exercise and no tobacco usage, then there's a good chance you'll live longer than these averages.

There's a website that can help you get a better feel for your expected lifespan; it's called Living to 100 (www.livingto100.com). The site asks you a series of questions including your birthday, gender and marital status, and some interesting questions related to the number of new relationships you've developed over the last 12 months, the way you cope with stress and some of the sources of stress you're currently experiencing, your normal sleep habits and your education level.

There are questions on nutrition, your height and weight, how often you eat red meat and sweets, and at the end, you are told how well your answers match up with the tendency to live a long life. At the end of a tutorial on your answers and suggestions for improvement, you get a calculated life expectancy, and a list of things that could add as many as ten years to that life expectancy.

Chances are, you'll be surprised at how long you're expected to live, and astonished at the possibilities suggested in the list of potential changes to your lifestyle. That means that you've managed your life and your health intelligently, and the extra years could be an unexpected bonus. Of course, it also means that you should take a second look at how much you've saved and the possibilities of using your skills and experience to earn income during retirement.

Bottom line: you may discover that you have 15 more years to live than you expected based on your experience with your parents, which means you can start thinking of yourself as 15 years younger when you look at your options and personal timeline.

By Bob Veres, publisher of [Inside Information](#) - the premier publication of financial industry trends and information for leading practitioners in the financial planning profession.