

## 200+ Ways to Feel—and Look—Younger



Forego  
Fast Food



Watch the  
Booze



Exfoliate  
Effectively



Watch Your  
Waistline



Protect Your  
Peepers

# Anti-Aging HACKS



Shake the Salt  
Habit



Keep It Moving



Embrace the  
Morning



Shun Secondhand  
Smoke



Catch a Concert



Go Veg



Skip Straws



Read a Book



Adopt a Dog



UV-Proof Your Car

**KAREN ASP**

## KNOW YOUR TMAO

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Do you eat meat regularly? Then you might consider getting your trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO) checked.

What on earth is trimethylamine N-oxide? TMAO is a compound your liver makes. When you consume red meat, egg yolks, and dairy products, you're chomping choline. You also get L-carnitine from red meat and some energy drinks and supplements. Your gut bacteria then digests choline and L-carnitine and produces a compound called trimethylamine (TMA). That's converted by your liver into another compound called TMAO.

If you've got high TMAO levels, you're at greater risk of heart attack, stroke, and death. Studies from Cleveland Clinic have shown that people with the highest TMAO levels are 2.5 times more at risk for those three conditions, even after adjusting for other risk factors like high blood pressure and diabetes. TMAO not only makes it easier for cholesterol to accumulate in your arteries and form plaque (the root cause of heart disease), it also reduces your body's ability to get rid of LDL (or bad) cholesterol.

A blood test can determine if your TMAO level is high. Currently, Cleveland HeartLab in Ohio is one of the few labs offering it. If your level is high, you can then modify your diet to lower it by limiting or avoiding foods such as full-fat dairy products and butter, red meat, and supplements and energy drinks that contain choline, phosphatidylcholine (lecithin), and/or L-carnitine. Then shift as much as possible to a Mediterranean or plant-only diet, as vegans and vegetarians generally produce little TMAO.

## **WEAR LARGE SUNGLASSES (EVEN ON CLOUDY DAYS)**

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Sunglasses are like sunscreen for your eyes, so if you want to avoid wrinkling from UV damage, invest in a pair and wear them whenever you're outdoors. Your eyes and the skin around them can be damaged by the same UV rays that cause sunburn on the rest of your body. Eyes that are exposed to UV light can develop cataracts and macular degeneration, both of which affect vision. UV rays can also cause sunburn of the eyelids and eyes, cancers on or around the eyes, red or swollen eyes, and yes, those dreaded wrinkles.

That's why it's important to wear UV-protective sunglasses (ask your optometrist if you're not sure if yours are UV-protective) whenever you're outside, even on cloudy days. A whopping 31 percent of solar radiation can still pass through clouds and damage eyes. Also, remember that sand, water, and snow can reflect UV rays—at a beach, sand or water can reflect up to 25 percent, while snow-covered surfaces can reflect up to 80 percent—and increase your exposure.

Check that any glasses you wear have 99 to 100 percent UV protection. For more protection around your eyes, the Skin Cancer Foundation recommends larger frames (they cover more of your face) and wraparound styles so you get more peripheral shade.

## SLATHER ON SUNSCREEN 365 DAYS A YEAR

Sunscreen isn't something you only put on when you're at the beach in the middle of the summer. Instead, it should be as much a part of your daily routine as brushing your teeth, even in winter or on cloudy days. That idea might sound like a marketing ploy by sunscreen companies until you consider this: more people are diagnosed with skin cancer than any other cancer, and by the age of seventy, one in five Americans will develop skin cancer, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. The sun is also responsible for 90 percent of skin aging, and because sun damage is cumulative—by eighteen, you've only accumulated 23 percent of your lifetime exposure, 47 percent by age forty—sunscreen is a must.

Plus, although the sun's rays are most intense on sunny days, you still need sunscreen when it's cloudy. Up to 80 percent of the sun's rays can penetrate through clouds and damage skin.

To keep your skin looking as young as possible, slather on a broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least an SPF of 30 daily (a moisturizer with SPF counts if you're just heading to the office or store). Be sure to get your hands, neck, face (don't forget your eyelids, which is where 10 percent of skin cancers occur), and chest (where you get the most sun exposure). People who do this experience 24 percent less skin aging than those who don't use it daily. Use at least a shot glass-sized amount for your whole body, or a teaspoon for your face. For guidance on buying sunscreen, check out the Environmental Working Group's annual guide to sunscreens, which you can find at [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org).

## SWITCH TO NON-DAIRY MILK

Got acne issues? How about wrinkles? Bet you didn't realize that dairy could be the culprit! Dairy has such a strong link to acne that a study from the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* called it a leading cause (along with high-glycemic foods). Why? Cow's milk contains insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), which could be one driver of acne. Plus, lactose intolerance, which becomes more common as you age, can worsen acne. Dairy has also been linked to increased skin wrinkling.

What about your health? Consuming dairy products has been linked with greater risk of several cancers, namely prostate, breast, and ovarian cancers, as well as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Plus, you're ingesting a load of contaminants—anything from hormones to pesticides—that can affect human health. And that assumption that you need dairy to protect against hip fractures? A *British Medical Journal* study followed over 100,000 Swedish men and women for twenty years, and although high milk intake was associated with greater deaths in men and women, women who drank the most milk suffered the most hip fractures (the finding didn't apply to men).

Fortunately, non-dairy alternatives are easier to find than ever, and they contain many of the same nutrients as dairy products. For non-dairy milk, try soy milk, which is most similar in terms of nutrients and texture to cow's milk. If that doesn't please your palate, there's almond, coconut, flaxseed, hemp, and pea, to name just a few.

## BOOST YOUR INTAKE OF LEAFY GREENS

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Could a salad a day keep aging away? It's possible.

That's one reason Dr. Michael Greger lists greens as part of his Daily Dozen: foods you should eat every day to live not only a high-quality life but a long one too. The reason? "Dark-green, leafy vegetables are the healthiest foods on the planet," he writes.

Here's why he says that. When Harvard University researchers analyzed numerous food groups, greens were associated with the strongest protection against major chronic diseases, including heart attacks and strokes. For every daily serving of greens you eat, your risk of these two diseases drops by about 20 percent.

Then there are the brain benefits you'll enjoy if you eat lots of greens. Healthy seniors who ate a daily serving of leafy greens ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked or 1 cup of raw greens) had a slower rate of cognitive decline, versus folks who ate little or no greens, according to a study in the journal *Neurology*. Those who ate their daily greens had brains that were about eleven years younger than folks who ate less.

Aim for at least two servings a day of greens, which could include arugula, beet greens, collard greens, mustard greens, and turnip greens, as well as kale, mesclun, spinach, and Swiss chard. One serving is 1 cup of raw greens, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked. One note, though: if you're taking warfarin (known as Coumadin), talk with your physician before you start eating more greens, as the vitamin K in the greens can interfere with warfarin's efficacy.

## ADOPT A DOG

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If you want to live longer, your anti-aging plan might include adding a dog to your family. When researchers looked at the connection between heart health and being a dog parent among records of over three million Swedes aged forty to eighty, they found that people with dogs live longer and healthier. This study didn't identify why dogs offered this protection against death and heart disease, but other studies have shown that dog parents are more physically active and tend to be more social. Researchers even suggest that being around a dog could have positive effects on the bacteria in your gut microbiome, which rules your health.

Regardless of the mechanism, having a dog can do wonders for your happiness and well-being. Of course, it's not a decision to be taken lightly, as adopting a dog is a serious commitment and requires not only time but also financial resources. If you're ready to take the plunge, follow the adopt-don't-shop message and visit a local shelter or rescue organization. And if you already have a dog, all the more reason to give him or her extra TLC. If it's not possible to adopt a dog, ask if you can spend time with a friend's dog, offer to walk your neighbor's dog if he or she is struggling with lack of time or health woes, or volunteer at a shelter or rescue organization.

## LOWER YOUR “FITNESS AGE”

You can't lower your real age, but lowering your *fitness* age could be one of your best anti-aging strategies. What is fitness age? It's a way to assess how old your body thinks it is, regardless of your real age. While you used to have to go to a lab to determine this, Swedish researchers developed a calculator so anybody can determine their fitness age. You just have to plug in certain numbers like your waistline measurement, maximum heart rate, exercise frequency and intensity, and your weight. Visit [www.worldfitnesslevel.org](http://www.worldfitnesslevel.org) to find a free quiz you can take in less than ten minutes. Check in every six months or so to see if your number has changed.

That's right—your fitness age isn't set in stone. You can always lower it, and you should, especially if it's either the same as or greater than your real age. If your fitness age is higher than your real age, take that as a sign to act. How can you lower your fitness age? Here are three easy ways: shoot for 10,000 steps a day, vary the intensity of your workouts, and build some muscle strength.

Here's why it's key to lower your fitness age: you'll gain additional years in life—about one to two years, according to some studies—and lower your risk of cancer and heart disease. You'll also improve your quality of life, and you'll be able to do more without getting so fatigued.

## READ A BOOK FOR THIRTY MINUTES A DAY

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Bookworms, rejoice: reading a book, fiction, in particular, could give you a survival advantage.

That's what a study in the journal *Social Science & Medicine* revealed after researchers examined the reading patterns of 3,635 people who were fifty or older. Overall, book readers (most likely fiction, versus newspapers or magazines) lived almost two years longer than non-readers. Reading as little as thirty minutes a day conferred these benefits.

Why is this true? Researchers suggest that books promote cognitive engagement, which may explain why vocabulary, reasoning, concentration, and critical thinking improve. Books also promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, all of which lead to overall well-being and happiness.

Here are three tips for sneaking in more reading time: swap a thirty-minute TV show with a reading session, read while exercising (audiobooks are perfect for this use), or carry a book with you 24/7 (that's very easy if you use an ereader app on your phone!) and squeeze in reading time whenever you're stuck waiting.

## FIND A FELINE FRIEND

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America may be a dog-loving nation—60.2 million households have a dog versus 47.1 million with a cat—but there's good reason to give cats a fair shake. Simply put, cats can prolong your life.

In a study from the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Neurology*, researchers found that during a twenty-year period, cat parents were less likely to die of a heart attack or stroke than non-cat folks. Non-cat people had a 40 percent greater risk of death by heart attack and 30 percent higher risk of death from any sort of cardiovascular disease than current or past cat parents. Why? Your kitty will also love hearing the answer: the simple act of petting your cat lowers blood pressure, which is why your heart benefits.

Want to bring home a feline friend? There are wonderful cats in shelters and rescue organizations awaiting their forever homes. You can connect with many of them by searching Petfinder ([www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)) or checking with local shelters. And if you can't bring a cat into your house, consider volunteering to help care for cats at shelters and rescue organizations.

## **CRAFT A LIFE PURPOSE STATEMENT TO IMPROVE WELL-BEING**

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Having purpose doesn't only give you more motivation to get out of bed every morning, it could also help you live longer. One of the most telling pieces of evidence to support this comes from a study of 9,050 people, averaging sixty-five years old. Those with the greatest well-being (as measured by questions that asked about the sense of control, life purpose, and feeling that what you're doing is worthwhile) were 30 percent less likely to die over the eight-and-a-half-year follow-up period than their peers with the lowest well-being. They also lived an average of two years longer than those with the lowest well-being.

So how do you find your purpose in life? Ask yourself what you love to do most, when you've experienced the greatest joy, and what you are most passionate about in life. Now draft a statement about how you want to live your life, based on that passion, and follow it daily.

## DON'T SIT FOR MORE THAN THIRTY MINUTES AT A TIME

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Bet you've heard that sitting is the new smoking. And it's true—to some extent. Sitting too long really can kill you, even if you're a devout gymgoer. When you sit for prolonged periods—research indicates that people spend 50 to 60 percent of their waking hours, or about eight to ten hours a day, sitting down—your body begins to shut down metabolically. The rate at which your fat cells produce fat accelerates. Blood flows more slowly throughout your body when you sit, which makes it more likely that fatty acids will add to plaque build-up in your heart's vessels. Sitting even compromises blood flow in your lower extremities, which can create dangerous conditions like deep vein thrombosis. And because you're not burning as many calories as when you're moving or standing, you risk gaining weight.

Bottom line? Sitting for prolonged periods of time is a risk factor for early death, and that risk increases the more you sit. According to a study in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, for folks sitting more than thirteen hours a day, their risk of death was 200 percent greater than those sitting for less than eleven hours a day. Even folks who exercised regularly weren't off the hook.

Research suggests that limiting sit time to fewer than thirty minutes is the best practice. Set a timer every thirty minutes if you must, whether you're in the office or at home, and take a five-minute standing break. Bonus points if you incorporate movement (think simple stretches, walking, or climbing stairs) into that break.

## EMBRACE MEATLESS MONDAYS

Cutting meat from your diet could be a big skin—and life—saver, even if you just do it once a week. Animal protein not only contributes to an early death, it also ages your skin. It might sound crazy to think that meat could lead to wrinkles, but remember that food can influence every organ in your body, including your skin. In the Food Habits in Later Life study of 2,000 people over seventy, those who frequently ate red meat, especially processed meat (think hot dogs, ham, bacon, sausage, and some deli meats), had more wrinkles than those who rarely consumed meat.

Animal protein damages other organs too. Eating too much red meat and not enough veggies could increase your body's biological age and contribute to health problems. Processed meat is also a carcinogen, meaning that it causes cancer, and red meat is a probable carcinogen. Saturated fat from animal products can even age your brain and cause an early death.

If cutting animal protein completely is too radical for you, adopt the Meatless Monday habit. The global movement, started in 2003 by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, encourages individuals to go meatless on Mondays. For more information, visit [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com).

## EAT THE DAILY DOZEN

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The book *How Not to Die* suggests that you should be eating eleven specific foods every day to prolong your life. This *New York Times* bestseller is by Dr. Michael Greger, a nutrition researcher and healthy-eating guru who runs [www.nutritionfacts.org](http://www.nutritionfacts.org). It distills healthy eating—all for the sake of achieving not just a long but also a disease-free life—into easy-to-swallow morsels of information, namely the eleven healthiest foods you should eat every day, supplemented by exercise. The key ingredient? All of them are plants, which Dr. Greger believes add years to your life and life to your years.

Here's your Daily Dozen checklist:

1. Beans—3 servings
2. Grains—3 servings
3. Berries—1 serving
4. Other fruits—3 servings
5. Greens—2 servings
6. Vegetables—2 servings
7. Cruciferous vegetables—1 serving
8. Flaxseed—1 serving
9. Nuts—1 serving
10. Spices—1 serving
11. Beverages (water, green tea, hibiscus tea)—1,750 ml
12. Exercise—90 minutes moderate or 40 minutes vigorous

You can also download Dr. Greger's Daily Dozen app for free and track your daily servings on your phone.

## RE-ESTABLISH GOOD SLEEP HABITS

Without proper sleep, your skin ages, your health crumbles, and you may not live as long—which is why you need to work on getting seven to nine hours every night. Here's sleep's surprising link to skin: sleeping for six hours just five nights in a row doubles the number of fine lines and wrinkles and increases brown spots and dark circles under the eyes. If too little sleep were to become your standard, all of those effects could worsen, triggering premature skin aging and permanent skin discoloration.

Studies have also shown that inadequate sleep contributes to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity; impairs learning and memory and raises your risk of Alzheimer's; weakens your immune system so you're more vulnerable to colds and the flu; affects your physical and mental performance; contributes to depression and other mental health disorders; and can even cause an early death. The list goes on, but suffice it to say that if you're among the one in every three Americans not getting the sleep you need, your health will suffer. Sleep, after all, is the only time your body has to heal—just ask any athlete about the powers of sleep—and without that time, negative consequences will result.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that individuals older than eighteen log seven to nine hours of sleep a night. To help you achieve that, stick with a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends; establish a relaxing bedtime ritual like taking a bath or meditating; avoid napping in the afternoons if you're having trouble sleeping; exercise daily; and sleep in a cool, dark, noise-free room.

## PUMP SOME IRON

Lifting weights isn't just for bodybuilders, Olympic athletes, or men. If you want to keep your muscles looking young and supple via tone and definition, you'll strength train two to three times a week. Loss of muscle mass and strength, something called sarcopenia, is a natural part of aging. You generally lose 5 to 7 pounds of muscle every decade of your adult years, which can decrease resting metabolic rate, or the rate at which your body burns calories, by 3 to 5 percent. This is one reason people typically gain weight and body fat as they age. Reduced muscle strength can also increase disability, interfere with your ability to walk and do other activities, and make you more vulnerable to falls. Yet all of this can be prevented through a regular strength training program.

Bonus? Strength training not only helps maintain and build bone density (which is key if you're at risk for osteoporosis), it also helps increase metabolism and decrease fat. That slimming effect will allow your muscles (for example, in common trouble spots like upper arms, thighs, and abs) to look more defined, giving you a more youthful appearance.

Aim to do strength training two to three times a week on non-consecutive days (your muscles need that time to rest), completing two to three sets of eight to twelve repetitions per exercise (if you're pressed for time, just do one set). And don't worry if you don't belong to a gym and can't access strength training machines. Other equipment may do a better job training your body, and you can stock all of it in a home gym. Consider dumbbells, resistance bands, stability balls, kettlebells, medicine balls, and TRX equipment.

## SET A DAILY STEP GOAL

Being sedentary for most of the day, even if you're exercising for a thirty-minute period, can raise your risk of numerous diseases as well as early death. Setting a step goal that fits your lifestyle might motivate you to move more throughout the day, decreasing some of that sedentary time. While you've probably heard that you should take 10,000 steps a day, roughly five miles, this number isn't based on any scientific evidence. It may even be too lofty a goal for some people, considering that the average American takes 4,774 steps per day (worldwide, the average daily step count is 4,961 steps).

Instead, set a daily step goal you can achieve. First, figure out how many steps you're currently taking by wearing a fitness tracker or pedometer (pedometers are cheaper and may track steps better than fitness trackers, but it's a personal preference) for seven days. Figure out the total number of steps for those days and divide by seven to determine your daily average step count. Then set a goal to increase that number by 5 to 10 percent over several weeks. If you find that you can easily achieve that and feel good about the movement you're doing, continue gradually increasing your steps.

And don't think you're off the hook if you hit the gym five days a week. More research is showing that while structured exercise (where you raise your heart rate) is good, that alone won't keep the body and brain young, and in fact, what you do—or don't do—between those workouts is just as important.

## VOLUNTEER REGULARLY

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Research shows that volunteering makes people not only happier but healthier. A European study found that volunteers are as healthy as non-volunteers five years younger. Talk about a positive way to turn back the clock! And indeed, studies have also found that people who volunteer may live longer than their non-volunteering counterparts with one caveat: your reason for volunteering should be about helping others instead of helping yourself.

You may not have much extra time in the week to spare on volunteering, and that's okay. Even just small amounts—as little as thirty minutes a week—are better than nothing, and plenty of organizations can use more hands on deck, no matter how much or how little time you have to give. Best part? You don't have to go anywhere physically if you're limited by time, resources, or geographic locations. You can lend that helping hand from the comfort of your home. To locate volunteer opportunities across the country, visit [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org) or contact an organization you're passionate about to learn how you can get involved.

## MEDITATE FOR ONE MINUTE A DAY

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If you want to dump stress (which is no doubt showing up on your skin), and even gain protection from aging on the cellular level, give meditation a shot for a single minute a day.

Studies show that regular meditation helps improve brain health, but it's also protecting you against aging on the cellular level. People with a longtime meditation practice—ten years in one study—have longer telomeres (the caps on your DNA strands) than people who have never meditated, and longer telomeres are associated with longer life.

You don't need to spend hours meditating every day to get the benefits. Even just *one* minute a day can give you the benefits of meditation. Once you find that you can set aside a minute a day—consider doing it before you get out of bed or right before you fall asleep—add a few more minutes until you're consistently doing between five and ten minutes a day. Just don't beat yourself up when your mind wanders, because it will. The main goal of meditation isn't to have your mind be entirely still. It's to train you to pull your mind back to the present every time it wanders, away. As you get better at meditating, focusing becomes easier.

Whether you do guided or unguided is also a personal preference. It might be best to start with guided meditation, especially if you've never done it, and then move into unguided once you get comfortable with it. Try using apps like Calm and Headspace for assistance.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

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Being part of a community actually builds your happiness and longevity muscles. In fact, connecting with others is so important that a Brigham Young University study found that being lonely and socially isolated is as big a threat to longevity as obesity. Other data shows that loneliness raises the risk of early death by as much as 30 percent.

Here's the surprise, though: loneliness and risk of death are stronger among individuals under sixty-five than those who are older. That echoes findings from a University of California, Berkeley, study in which twenty-year-olds, in spite of having larger social networks, reported feeling twice as lonely and isolated as people aged fifty to seventy.

You may already have a group of close friends, which is great—but you can also look to join groups of new people who are focused on issues or topics you're passionate about in life. For instance, if you love to read books, look for a book club, or if you're a fan of plant-based eating, see if there's a *Facebook* group that announces meet-ups with like-minded herbivores. Hang with them at least once a week.

## WRITE IN A WORRY JOURNAL

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Stress is no friend to aging. A whopping eight of ten Americans report feeling frequently stressed, the biggest stressors being kids and work, according to Gallup. The effects can show up instantly on your face with worry lines, and they become even more pronounced if you're not sleeping. And while you can't see inside your body, that stress could be wreaking havoc on your heart and other organs.

By keeping a worry journal, though, you dump your worries from your head onto a paper, and that alone can ease anxieties. You might also shift your perspective about your worries, even come up with solutions to some of them. To do it, take five minutes a day to write down some of your top worries and, if possible, a doable solution to each. Do this at any time during the day, although avoid doing it too close to bed or churning difficult thoughts could affect your sleep.

## STAND UP

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Too much sedentary time is bad for your health and your longevity. Here's an easy way to combat that: stand up when you're waiting for something. Think about all the waiting you do in life: waiting to see a doctor, waiting to board a plane, waiting for a table at a restaurant, and so on.

Now think about what you're doing as you wait. If you're like most people, you're probably looking for a chair. No more. Instead, use that time to stand—or even better, move around. Standing, after all, burns fifty more calories an hour than sitting—do this for thirty extra minutes a day and you could actually lose a little over 5 pounds in a year without changing anything else. You'll get even more benefits if you can move around during this time—walk around the airport terminal, doctor's office, or restaurant grounds.

## CELEBRATE YOUR AGE

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It's time to stop complaining about getting older and instead celebrate your age!

Granted, it's not always fun to see your hair go gray or your skin get more wrinkly. But age really is just a number, and if you don't mind, it doesn't matter. Only you can decide what that number means, and know that age doesn't have to define you. Just look to the former president George H.W. Bush, who went skydiving on his ninetieth birthday.

So view each birthday as a celebration and find a way to honor the years you've spent on this earth—and all the years you have yet to enjoy. Maybe you donate your age in dollars to your favorite non-profit organization, walk your age in miles over a certain period (for instance, if you're turning 50, you could set a goal to walk 5 miles a day for ten days), spend a month doing as many random acts of kindness as your age, dedicate your age in minutes to doing something you love doing (and rarely make time to do) on your birthday, or treat yourself to a special birthday gift equal to your age in dollars (talk about something to look forward to each year!). The simple fact is that it's a gift to be alive, so enjoy the present!