Unhealthy Habits May Age Your Body 12 Years

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The four most common bad habits—smoking, excessive drinking, poor diet and inactivity—can age your body by 12 years, according to a new study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* and reported by The Associated Press.

For the 20-year study, researchers monitored 5,000 adults randomly selected from a nationwide British health survey. A total of 314 people from the group practiced all four bad habits compared with 387 who did not.

During the study, 91 people from the bad-habit group died compared with 32 from the group with no bad habits.

Researchers found that the combined activities of smoking tobacco, indulging in alcoholic drinks (more than three daily for men and two for women), getting less than two hours of weekly exercise, and eating fruits and vegetables less than three times a day increased people's death risk and aged their bodies by 12 years.

But if you're guilty as charged, it's not too late to change your evil ways, researchers said. You can lower your death risk with some lifestyle changes.

"You don't need to be extreme," said Elisabeth Kvaavik, a doctor at the University of Oslo, and the study's lead author.

People in the healthiest group either never smoked or quit the habit. They also had fewer drinks a day, got the required amount of exercise and ate the recommended fruit and vegetable servings.

"These behaviors add up, so together it's quite good. It should be possible for most people to manage to do it," Kvaavik explained.

These findings show that maintaining a healthy lifestyle will increase your odds of living longer, said June Stevens, a University of North Carolina public health researcher.

Read these tips about how to break bad habits for life here.

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