

Forever Young

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Over the last 200 years, people have begun to live longer and longer. This trend began in the more economically developed countries and for some time there was a growing gap between the average length of life in rich countries and poor countries. Over the past few decades, however, many poor countries have also made improvements and they are now close to catching up with the wealthier ones. As a result, every year there is a growing number of older people in countries all over the world.

It is a good thing that people are living longer, but it does have some difficult aspects. One of these is that more and more people are suffering from diseases associated with getting older. The number of cases of high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses is increasing. In Australia, for instance, a recent report said that people, on average, live 25 years longer than they did a hundred years ago. Now, there are many more people suffering from serious illnesses. One consequence is that each year countries have to spend more and more on medical care for older people.

Many governments have begun to promote healthier lifestyles for young people, such as losing weight and exercising regularly, as a way to prevent serious illnesses. However, as the body gets older, even people who have lived healthily are likely to become ill. Recently, research has begun to show that this is the result of people's DNA getting older. When DNA breaks down, important information to control the body's functions is lost. Eventually, serious illnesses may occur.

However, David Sinclair, a researcher at the University of New South Wales in Australia, is working on a way to keep DNA healthy. He used a chemical called nicotinamide mononucleotide (NMN) to see if he could reduce the effects of age on mice. Mice that were given NMN became stronger and healthier than they had been, showing that the chemical was effective. He believes that one day this chemical could be used to make a medicine for humans. In this way, old people may be able to live both longer and healthier lives.