

health & bodybook

MUST-READ NEWS AND EXPERT ADVICE TO HELP PROTECT THE BODY YOU LOVE

Health secrets from around the world

fact: American women have an average life expectancy of 80.97 years. Sounds pretty good, but that actually ranks the U.S. a lowly *forty-fourth* in the world for longevity, according to data published in the CIA's 2007 *World Factbook*. (Even Bosnia beat us!) People in countries rated above us may exercise more and eat more veggies. But other factors matter too, says Dan Buettner, founder of the Blue Zones project, which studies the habits that lead to long life spans. Here, he pinpoints the perks that make certain countries so healthy—and how you can import them into *your* life.



#3
JAPAN

Go for sushi

The Japanese diet consists mainly of fish, veggies and tofu—a big reason why women there reach an average age of 85.56. Phytoestrogens in tofu may protect the heart and help prevent cancer, and the omega-3 fatty acids in fish may ward off brain and heart ills.



#7
FRANCE

Pop the cork with pals

France's daily flavonoid-rich wine habit may help women hit age 84. "But it's not just the wine, it's the way they drink," says Buettner. The French sip while lingering over group meals, enjoying the perks of stress reduction and friendship, too.



#1
ANDORRA

Get insured!

This tiny European country ranks first, with a life span of 86.62 years for women. Is it the gorgeous weather? The folk dancing? Maybe—but Buettner says their health system trumps all. Like Sweden (#17) and Canada (#8), Andorra offers comprehensive care to all residents. "Good public health care—vaccinations, prenatal care and preventive tests—has one of the biggest effects on life span," he says. Just one more reason never to go without insurance.



#16
ITALY

Book a trip

Italians average 42 (!!) vacation days a year, while we get just 13. No wonder women there live till 83.07. Leisure cuts your risk for countless illnesses, research shows. While constant stress definitely shortens life, "there's evidence that we do need a little bit of stress," says Buettner. "The key is balance."

—KARA WAHLGREN

