

NECS has 1,600 subjects, among them is de Filippi.

The first findings, published in Living to 100: Lessons in Living to Your Maximum Potential at Any Age, underscore what many of us with stubborn vices would prefer to ignore: clean living pays off. Indeed, many centenarians have made long-term lifestyle choices that have a back-to-basics simplicity: eating healthy foods, not smoking, maintaining strong relationships, using optimism to overcome adversity, and exercising regularly for the mind and body.

FOR SCIENTISTS, THOUGH, the secrets of long life are locked up in the genes. And indeed, as the NECS data show, extreme longevity tends to run in families. In Cambridge, at Elixir Pharmaceuticals, scientists are untangling the complex connections between so-called longevity genes and their control over the "pathways" of aging-that is, the enzymes and proteins that regulate the rate at which a person ages. By understanding what happens at the molecular level, Elixir can intervene with drugs that slow the processes of disease and aging. "Elixir's goal is to develop drugs that will trick the body into going into this long-lived, diseaseresistant state so that you will live longer," says CEO William Heiden. Though the company plans to debut new drugs to treat metabolic diseases like diabetes and obesity in just a few years, says Heiden, the availability of a "long-life pill" is at least a few decades away.

For many people, like de Filippi, aging the old-fashioned way may be a drag, but it's part of the natural order of the universe. "There's a time to come," as she puts it. "And a time to go."

THE HEALTH SURVEY

HOW DO WE STACK UP AGAINST OUR NEIGH-BORS?///We pay more for doctors' visits than the the average American, our life expectancy is about a year less than the national average, and nearly half of us are overweight. Is there any good news to report? You bet. Massachusetts is the sixth-healthiest state and has the nation's second-highest physician-to-patient ratio. Plus, according to our exclusive health and sex survey, our marriages are happier, we're having sex regularly, and many of us get our exercise by walking to work every day.

PHYSICAL HOW LONG WE LIVE/// The life expectancy of Bostonians is 76.4 years. The national average is 77.2. WHAT WE DIE OF///Our top three causes of death are cancer (lung cancer is number one), heart disease, and stroke. HOW FAT WE ARE /// About half of us are overweight, and 17.4 percent are obese. compared to the national average of 20.9 percent. HOW WE GET AROUND/// About 16 percent of us bike or walk to work (as compared to 5.7

percent nationally).
WHERE WE SWEAT IT
OUT///Massachusetts
is ranked fourth in
the nation in health
club membership at
18.1 percent. Twelve
percent of us exercise
daily, and 63 percent
work out more than
once a week.
WHEN WE DON'T FEEL
WELL///Eighty-eight
percent of us legiti-

percent of us legitimately call in sick one to three days a year. WHAT'S WRONG WITH US///About 86 percent of us have at least one cold a year. WHEN IT'S TIME TO

CALL THE DOCTOR ///
There are 923 physicians for every
100,000 people in
Boston, more than
triple the number in
an average U.S. city.
About 85 percent of
us visit the doctor at
least once a year. We
pay an average of \$86

per visit—about \$20 more than the typical American.
WE'RE (NOT) SMOKIN'
///Only 19.7 percent of us smoke (compared to 23.4 nationally).

EMOTIONAL HOW STRESSED WE ARE///Of the 100 largest U.S. cities. Boston is the 77th most stressed-out. New York ranks fifth. HOW UNSTABLE ARE WE///More than half of us have seen a therapist. HOW COMMITTED WE ARE///Massachusetts has the nation's lowest divorce rate: 2.4 per 1,000 people. Nevada has the highest, with 6.8 per 1,000.)

HOW SAD WE ARE///
Three percent of
adults report that they
were depressed for 30
of the last 30 days—
about the same as the
national average.
WHEN BLUE SKIES
ARETHE ONLY CURE
FOR WHAT AILS US///
The sun shines on
Boston about 205
days a year.

SPIRITUAL
WHEN WE NEED GUIDANCE FROM A HIGHER
POWER///There are
about 370 houses of
worship, but only 23
percent of us go at
least once a month.

ENVIRONMENTAL
WHAT WE BREATHE///
Air quality in Boston
gets a grade of 26 out

of 100, compared to the national average of 33 for major cities. WHAT WE DRINK/// Water quality here gets a failing grade of 1 out of 100. (New York gets a 42.)

NATURAL
WHERE WE GO TO BE
ONE WITH NATURE///
There are 2,220 acres
of public green space.

SEXUAL WHAT WE DO BETWEEN THE SHEETS///51 percent of us have sex at least once a week. WHAT WE SUFFER FROM SEXUALLY///The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases increased 22.5 percent from 1999 to 2002, with 758 new cases per 100,000 people. Some 4,920 people in Boston proper are known to have HTV or ATDS HOW MANY PREGNAN-CIES WE'VE HAD// There were more than 130,000 pregnancies in the state in 2000. **HOW MANY ABORTIONS** ARE PERFORMED. More than 30,000 abortions were performed in Massachusetts in 2000.

Reporting by Marisa Iallonardo

