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Boomers aging worse than previous generations

Thursday, February 07, 2013

This article interested me since I'm on the leading edge of the Boomer generation. Where exactly are we leading?

www.nbcnews.com/id/50698468/ns/health-health_care/?ocid=msnhp&pos=3

When we were born, we led the country into a building boom. We overcrowded the schools, city apartments and sent our parents in droves to new communities in the suburbs. (not mine, but many others)

We descended on the colleges in great numbers and the oldest of us found jobs readily available because of the baby bust that preceded us. Those coming up next found us clogging their path.

We provided manpower for the draft, and participants for demonstrations. And we didn't trust anyone over 30.

As it turns out, compared to the "Greatest Generation" that fought WWII or the "Lost Generation" born between the wars, we just may be the sickest generation.

Of course, it depends on your perspective. Personally, I feel very fortunate, whether because of genetics, lifestyle or just plain luck. You can never generalize from personal experience. Everyone knows someone who defies the odds or doesn't fit the norm, the outliers of the normal curve.

Yet, they say that as a group, Boomers are sicker than previous generations.

I wonder about the self-reporting factor. We have always had very high expectations. Although I don't take any medication and fortunately do not have to cope with a chronic illness, I probably would say that my health is "good," maybe "very good." But excellent?

I would think about how my pollen allergies keep me from running outside many days of the year, and the supply of OTC antihistamines in my cupboard. Then there's that albuterol inhaler in my purse. Sometimes, it passes the expiration date without ever being used, but I never know if I'll get stuck with a smoker and no means of escape or maybe come upon a construction area while stuck in a traffic jam, so I carry it.

Still, I can't miss the much larger number of "handicapped" parking places and mobile shopping carts than there used to be. Is it that my generation needs these things in greater numbers than previous groups or are we just more vocal about demanding them?

We can't ignore the evidence that we're heavier than our parents were. It's a recent development that hospital equipment has to be super-sized to care for the increasing size of patients.

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In the 50s we were the tallest nation on earth. Now that honor belongs to the Netherlands. We're the heaviest country on earth.

Developments in medicine keep us all living longer. Are we going to live longer, but sicker? We Boomers have greatly affected society at every stage as we moved through our lives. I hope we don't have a burdensome, negative effect at the end of it.

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GINIEMIE

DR1939 has best stated many of my thoughts. But one of the ones I wanted to talk about was, back in the day you paid your own doctor bills. The insurance was for emergency and pre-natal care and not even all of it. So of course many people stayed home, used home remedies and took care of each other. We also had quarantines, which my family was subject to on numerous occasions.

People now-a-days have insurance so they run to the doctor for many little pains, or illnesses. We've become a "sick" society because we are needy. I'm not saying some people don't have legitimate illnesses or aches and pains, I'm saying since everyone is so disconnected they go to a professional for help & documentation instead of getting family help.



3048 days ago



SWEDE_SU

thought provoking - as you can see from all the responses! thanks for sharing!
3048 days ago



SOPHIEDO13

Well in the 1800's the average age was 35 they were worked to death in my opinion and didn't experience the effects age has on a person. Besides everyone has something that's just not 100 percent as far as health. I could go on but boomers are going to be blamed for different things

deserved or not!!



3049 days ago



CD8467616

DR1939 nailed it. I agree with his assessment. I also think that "studies" that make the "news" are there to play on people's emotions. There's a study out there that can "prove" anything. Don't let so-called experts define the answers, let alone the questions!
3049 days ago



BOILHAM

I don't buy it. Our life expectancy has increased so much over those born 50 years before we baby boomers. Aging brings with it some aches and pains. But more of us are alive. Previous generation were not living as long, so how could they declare aches, pains or levels of perceived health.

Another irresponsible study.

Just wait till these kids who grew up on video games and indulgent parents instead of playing outdoors and having parents who cared about what they eat grows older. Then we will truly see a poorly aging group. Well, I won't be here to see it, but you know what I mean.

Good blog.

3049 days ago



BROOKLYN_BORN

I love reading all the thoughtful comments and different perspectives. Identification of new illnesses is a most interesting observation as well as the refinement of test results.

I'm sure my grandparents never heard of fibromyalgia or restless leg syndrome or even a condition like PMS. They were happy to have avoided TB and Black Lung disease (coal miners). Of course, living longer gives us the chance to develop more ailments. Still the oldest of the boomers are only mid sixties. How do we compare with previous generations that survived the diseases curable by modern medicine?

I'm not sure the article addresses that properly. Along with the "self-reporting" difficulty, perhaps it only raises more questions.



3049 days ago



DR1939

Perceptions of health are not the same thing as health. They are colored by expectations. Our expectations have been raised by pictures of women in their 90s that are dancers. No one in my mother's generation expected to live that long or that well. But today we do and when we begin to feel pains we perceive our health as poor or at least not as good as we would like it.

One must be cautious about comparing disease levels to prior times. About 30 years ago the clinical definition of diabetes was changed from a blood glucose of above 150 (I think, it could have been higher) to above 125. Overnight a huge number of people suddenly had diabetes. This was an absolutely appropriate redefinition and was much needed. The same thing happened with blood pressure. Until the 1990s we did not know what a healthy bp really was. Research was conducted and the current levels were established. Again, overnight lots of people had high bp. Weight was redefined in the early 2000. What is now obese used to be normal. Cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels, same thing. Most of these were based on sound research and were needed revisions, but to say that we had an huge increase is wrong.

There are numerous disorders that have been named and now treated with drugs. Most of these existed in prior times but there was no treatment for them, therefore you were not sick. Lots of these were disorders that women reported. For example, fibromyalgia and MS both were once seen as manifestations of women's unhappiness or laziness. Now they are established disorders.

Finally, the widespread availability of routine medical treatment paid for by insurance has led to the documentation of more instances of illness. If it was not documented it could not be counted and did not exist.

We live longer and, in general, we live better. However, longer life does bring more problems. When most people died at 50 joints did not wear out, so arthritis was not as widespread. Now that most people live into their 70s, we see an epidemic of arthritis.
3049 days ago



CAKEMAKERMOM

I wonder if some of it happens to be because we have more "labels" for "illnesses"? Seems there is always a new one being "discovered" by pharmaceutical companies.
3049 days ago



WILSONWR

I think there is some truth to the article. We live longer now because of all the medical advances. The people in the previous generation who ate like most of our generation were probably not around as long as we are. The ones who lived longer took care of themselves! Fast foods, fatty snacks, and a more sedentary lifestyle can definitely affect your health. As a few have mentioned, I'm even more concerned about the next generation as computer games seem to have replaced active outside "kid" games. We've got to push for both better nutrition and more active exercise! I take my grandkids out to play frisbee golf at least 3 times a week.

P.S. I'd say you were in "excellent" condition! Not too many folks our age can keep up with you!
3049 days ago



CELIAMINER

I never answer "excellent" when asked to judge my level of health. In my mind, that distinction is reserved for people who are in superb condition. Because of the health issues I face that are unrelated to obesity, I still check "average" even after losing the weight. Still, I think overall I'm doing okay.
3049 days ago



NELLJONES

I don't buy it. We are healthier than those who lived 100 or more years ago. Antibiotics weren't discovered until after WWII. My father was crippled with polio, a terrible scourge we no longer see. We have vaccines for diseases that killed millions. Until the last century, men generally lived longer than women because women died all the time in childbirth. My grandmother used to tell me that every family lost someone to accident, childbirth or disease (her own mother died giving birth to a son). People used to starve to death in this country. People died of diseases of impure water before the concept of sanitation. This is all gone, replaced by diseases of prosperity. Since all we boomers have ever known is prosperity, it's hard to imagine how poor most people used to be. And even into the 70s, men died of heart attacks in their 50s all the time, and women died in their 60s. When social security was founded in the 30s, average life expectancy was less than the 65 year old qualification age.

In this day and age we have within our grasp the ability for most of us to live longer and healthier than any of our forebears. It's a choice we all can make or not. What we can't do is blame society.
3049 days ago



SUZYMOBILE

Compared to others your age, Eileen, I'd say your health is excellent!
3049 days ago



COCK-ROBIN

Quite true. Obesity seems to be a trademark of our generation.
3049 days ago



MOOSLADY



This is certainly true of my siblings who were born between 1951 and 1955. While none are over weight, my sister has been told she is skinny-fat and has bad cholesterol numbers, even though she is a vegetarian. My brothers have terrible spine problems, chronic pain, chronic fatigue for one and have had to have surgeries. One brother has carpal tunnel which has been operated on a couple times. When my parents were the age they are now, they had zero health problems of any kind. Not sure what is the reason? My dad worked as a quality assurance engineer and earlier a chemist for the space program which shouldn't be more stressful than a development architect and manufacturing maintenance man like my brothers or special ed aid like my sister. Bad diet? Not my brothers, they eat very healthy. My sister may not eat meat but she lives off the reduced bakery rack so maybe a little reason there. Satisfaction with life? my maintenance man brother only has wear and tear injuries from his job but is pretty much at peace with his life, looking forward in 7-10 years to retiring to Costa Rica with his boat. The other two siblings are pretty bitter about how their lives have gone. My parents are pretty much at peace with their lives too. It would have been interesting to test that as a factor in life expectancy.
3049 days ago



MISSUSRIVERRAT



In some ways I question these reports and articles. I am not saying that there is not truth in them. I am just saying that studies are not always measuring what they say they are. Then, when they compare one to another, they are not comparing the same thing. It sometimes seems that they can prove whatever they want to, just by how they design the study.
3049 days ago

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1935MARY



I love this . It sounds so true and I fall in this. I just think. that every generation is sicker than the one before them. I think it has allot to do with our food ,what is really in them. Fast food eating. Power plants, Our environment has more pollution , and it is getting worst everyday. The generation , before us grew their food and raise their meats, worked hard and lived longer. We work hard, are stressed out, eat out or on the run, watch to much tv , bored and depressed, and most of all we don't care, until we have a wake up call. We need to work harder for the next generation will have survive. Have a great day.
3049 days ago



CD13150933



Very interesting.
3049 days ago



CLUMBOY



thought provoking stuff. the generation that is growing up now may surpass us in overall sickness--lately i have been reading a book that documents things like bone loss and lower cognitive function in CHILDREN who do not get enough exercise. its very worrisome. fortunately our knowledge is growing and places like sparkpeople are spreading the word. we have to hope it will at least make a dent in the problem!
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