

The Wellness Zone Podcast: Aging Transcript

Mary Perry

Hello and welcome to the Wellness Zone podcast. I'm Mary Perry and today I'm here with Dr. Barry Sears. Dr. Sears, thanks for being here.

Dr. Barry Sears

Thank you. It's always fun to talk about science.

Mary Perry

That's right. Today, we're talking about aging and who doesn't want to age gracefully? But you're going to tell us a bit about the difference between getting older and faster aging.

So let's let's talk. We're going to dive a little bit into aging here. So let's first start with that. What's really the difference between us getting older versus aging faster.

Dr. Barry Sears

Well, getting older is what you call chronological age. It's your birthday. Biological age is quite different. It's really basically looking how fast are you aging from a biological standpoint?

What does that really mean? It means you're growing inability to heal damage to the body. So as we get older, which is a chronological age, we want to basically dissociate chronological age from biological age. And that means we are able to heal from our injuries more effectively. And by doing so, yes, you will basically live better as you get older.

Mary Perry

All right. So what causes aging? And I guess we're going to be talking about biological aging here, but what causes it?

Dr. Barry Sears

Well, I said earlier, it's really basically the inability to heal completely from damage to the body. And what controls that? Your metabolism. And so really the key to aging successfully that is basically aging at a biological rate slower than your chronological age is making sure your metabolism is working at peak efficiency.

Now, what does that mean? It means you're in the zone. And that's where the whole concept came 40 years ago. How can we use diet as a powerful tool, a powerful genetic tool, to basically allow us to age at a slower rate by maximizing our metabolism.

Mary Perry

So how would you know if your metabolism is promoting you to age faster?

Dr. Barry Sears

Well, the best way is the blood. The blood will give you an insight years before you see the physical signs of aging. The sooner I see my blood moving out of that target zone, the more I can take action to bring it back, to really do a course correction, to basically now make sure my metabolism is working that will allow me to heal from damage most effectively.

Now, what is that blood test? That blood test is known as HOMA-IR. It's a blood test developed back at the mid 1980s. And what it looks at is what is called insulin resistance. Now insulin resistance, you say, well, that has to do a blood sugar. No, is actually a catch all term for your metabolism that is simply not working very efficiently.

So what happens when you have a car and it's not working very efficiently?

Mary Perry

You bring it into the shop.

Dr. Barry Sears

Right. It isn't working. So because you didn't take care of it. This is why we had to look at our metabolism and our diet as a powerful, incredibly powerful drug that can either rev up and make our habits of metabolism more efficient or basically make it far less efficient and we age at a faster rate.

Mary Perry

So are you essentially saying that if we can keep insulin resistance in a desirable range it will slow down the aging process?

Dr. Barry Sears

Well, actually, we want to eliminate insulin resistance. That means if you basically eliminate it, your metabolism is working at peak efficiency. Now, how many Americans have basically no insulin resistance?

Mary Perry

I'm assuming very few.

Dr. Barry Sears

You're correct, Less, less than 1%. And as a consequence, why are our health care costs going up? Because we're aging biologically at a faster rate. So the key is saying I want to eliminate insulin resistance. I want to make my metabolism to be as efficient as possible. What drug do I use? There's no drug, but there is one proven technology, one proven technology that can do that. It's called calorie restriction. They say, "Well, that means I'm not eating anything." No, calorie restriction is defined as restricting calories without restricting nutrition. It means you're eating less calories, but you're maintaining high levels of nutrient intake. That means you're getting adequate levels of protein.

You need protein to rebuild damaged tissue. It means you're getting carbohydrates, not too much, but not too little. You're getting the right types of fat, primarily, omega three fatty acids because they help repair the process. You're getting polyphenols. These are the chemicals that give fruits and vegetables their color. We often hear eat more fruits and vegetables.

They're correct. Now you ask why. You say, I don't know. Well, the answer is because they're colorful, they contain polyphenols. And you get adequate levels of polyphenols that also helps make the metabolism more efficient. So now go back to the answer. Is calorie restriction with all the essential nutrients in the appropriate balance day in and day out? They say, "Oh my God, this is so hard, my mind's exploding." Can't I just take a pill?

It doesn't work that way. But if you master and master the rules of what I call metabolic engineering, you can do this day in and day out for the rest of your life. And what are the benefits? You'd associate biological aging from chronological aging. Spoiler alert: We're all going to die. Now, we want to basically die as healthy as possible. That means basically increasing our health span. And that's the goal. That's the goal, not only of aging, it's the goal of medicine.

Mary Perry

And one thing I just want to mention, because you've talked about this before, is usually when you're restricting calories, you get hungry. But going back to what you said about this macronutrient balance, you can restrict calories, but do it where you have satiation. If you have this balance to your macronutrient tech that you just discussed. And I think it's important to mention

Dr. Barry Sears

And and that's the key. The fact is if you're restricting calories and being hungry, how long is that going to go on? About 45 minutes. So the key to metabolic engineering is to be able to restrict calorie intake, make sure you have maximum nutrient intake and you're never hungry.

Right now, there's only two ways of doing that. One, basically taking injectable drugs like Wegovy or Ozempic. They say, "I'm not hungry." Well, you're right, you're not hungry, but you're also basically restricting protein too much because you aren't eating enough. What happens? You start losing lean body mass. And what's that? Well, it does include muscle. That's not good.

It includes, you know, the heart. That's not good. Includes the kidney, the liver, the brain. So this is sort of make me age faster. See, you got it. So what you have to do is basically restrict calories, but also from the standpoint make sure all those other checkmarks are being done. And now that becomes a second way. Metabolic engineering using food as a powerful drug that has no known side effects.

But if you do it correctly and it's not that hard, you can now basically have calorie restriction without hunger, without fatigue, without loss of lean body mass for a longer period of time.

Mary Perry

And who doesn't want that? So we can't change your chronological age in the zone, but biologically, we can change our aging through following metabolic engineering.

Dr. Barry Sears

And what we're doing is now increasing your health span. So it's not saying I want to live longer, I want to live healthier. And so, is there some drug for that? No, but there is a dietary way. Diet is far more complex than drugs because metabolism is far more complex. And yet our diet can control our metabolism. That means, yeah, I get it. A slow metabolism means I'm getting fat.

That's partially true. That's why you gain weight. Your metabolism is not very efficient, but your metabolism also controls your immune system. It controls how the body heals, it controls inflammation, turning it on, turning it off. It basically controls everything that's important in your life.

Mary Perry

Very complex, Dr. Sears. But thank you for enlightening us on biological aging. I think that's where all of us desire to be, to have the most quality to our years, right?

Dr. Barry Sears

Not only that but we had to say do we have the science to support it? Until recently, we really didn't. Because how to live longer or better, that was really this the sphere of bloggers or bio hackers.

"I'm doing this and I'm living longer." Great for you. But, is there any science? It's taken us a long time and really, this has been about a \$50 million study by the government. It's called the

CALERIE study. Taking people and saying I want you to restrict your calories, without hunger or fatigue. And to make sure I'll give you \$5,000 to do the study. Well, I get free food and \$5000?

Count me in. So we have now for the first time real human data, not rats, not you know, bacteria, but humans. And what they found, if you can just restrict your calories by 10% for a two year period, you could slow down the rate of aging. And these were in people who are normal weight.

They were not obese. They had no they had no chronic disease. But in a two year period, they could show that their rate of aging had slowed down. Now, this means, though, you had to do this for the rest of your life. And so the secret is basically finding the right combination, the right combination of protein, carbohydrate and fat, that can allow you to basically rev up your metabolism but never be hungry. That's the holy grail of diet.

Mary Perry

Well, you've just shed so much light on stuff that most people think is in a pill or something you apply topically. So thanks so much, Dr. Sears. This was really enlightening on biological aging and what we can do to age successfully and gracefully. So thanks for your time today.

Dr. Barry Sears

As they say, live longer. Live better.

Mary Perry

That's right. Thanks again, Dr. Sears.