

# Feeling younger than actual age meant lower death rate for older people

15 December 2014

Turns out, feeling younger than your actual age might be good for you.

A research letter published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine* found that [older people](#) who felt three or more years younger than their chronological [age](#) had a lower death rate compared with those who felt their age or who felt more than one year older than their actual age.

Self-perceived age can reflect assessments of health, physical limitation and well-being in later life, and many older people feel younger than their actual age, according background information in the report. Authors Isla Rippon, M.Sc., and Andrew Steptoe, D.Sc., of the University College London, examined the relationship between self-perceived age and mortality.

The authors used data from a study on aging and included 6,489 individuals, whose average chronological age was 65.8 years but whose average self-perceived age was 56.8 years. Most of the adults (69.6 percent) felt three or more years younger than their actual age, while 25.6 percent had a self-perceived age close to their real age and 4.8 percent felt more than a year older than their [chronological age](#).

Mortality rates during an average follow-up of 99 months were 14.3 percent in adults who felt younger, 18.5 percent in those who felt about their actual age and 24.6 percent in those adults who felt older, according to the study results. The relationship between self-perceived age and cardiovascular death was strong but there was no association between self-perceived age and cancer death.

"The mechanisms underlying these associations merit further investigation. Possibilities include a broader set of health behaviors than we measured (such as maintaining a healthy weight and adherence to medical advice), and greater

resilience, sense of mastery and will to live among those who feel younger than their age. Self-perceived age has the potential to change, so interventions may be possible. Individuals who feel older than their actual age could be targeted with health messages promoting positive health behaviors and attitudes toward aging," the study concludes.

**More information:** *JAMA Intern Med.* Published online December 15, 2014. [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2014.6580](#)

Provided by The JAMA Network Journals

APA citation: Feeling younger than actual age meant lower death rate for older people (2014, December 15) retrieved 27 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-younger-actual-age-meant-death.html>

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