

THE CQ Researcher

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Baby Boomers at Midlife

Are they trying too hard to stay young?



In 1996, the first members of the baby boom generation turned 50. But unlike their parents and grandparents, the 78 million Americans born from 1946 to 1964 are not accepting aging as a time of inevitable decline. Growing numbers of boomers are trying to stop the clock with remedies ranging from rigorous exercise and dieting to “anti-aging” hormones. Many experts say that fighting Father Time will lead millions of people to longer, healthier and happier lives and, in the long run, reduce the nation’s health-care costs. But other observers argue that efforts to stay young will lead to inevitable disappointment and self-delusion.

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Baby Boomers at Midlife

BY DAVID MASCI

THE ISSUES

Last September, 47-year-old Jim Valentine of Gaithersburg, Md., set about changing his life. "I realized that if I kept up with my current lifestyle, I'd start to really deteriorate," he says.

Valentine, a media buyer for publisher NRI McGraw-Hill, rarely exercised and compounded the damage with bad eating habits. "I was eating like I was still 16," he says. "I'd go to McDonalds and get two Big Macs — stuff like that."

Valentine kicked off his transformation campaign by replacing McDonalds and other junk foods with Weight Watchers.

"It was not so much a question of eating less as of eating the right kinds of food," he says. "Even at restaurants, I just started ordering things like salad or fish — without salt or butter."

He also started an exercise regimen that included daily workouts on a cross-country skiing machine and walks during his lunch hour or after dinner.

Since he began his new regimen, Valentine has lost 60 pounds. "I look and feel like a new person," he says.

Valentine's efforts involved more than just looking and feeling better. In retrospect, he realizes that his commitment to a healthier lifestyle came at around the same time he began to seriously ponder his upcoming 50th birthday. "For the first time, I began to think about my mortality," he says.

Millions of other baby boomers over age 50 also are collectively beginning to consider the dual implications of reaching middle age and growing older. *



But many experts, including sociologists, demographers, psychotherapists and gerontologists, worry that many boomers are fighting the aging process, rather than accepting its inevitability with grace and dignity.

"They're so self-absorbed that the concept of mortality might shock them and lead them to go to terrible lengths to avoid it," says Cheryl Russell, a consultant on aging and author of *The Master Trend*, which profiles the baby boom generation. Or, as Gail Sheehy, the best-selling author of *Passages*, puts it: Boomers, "having indulged [themselves] in the longest adolescence in history, betray a collective terror and disgust of aging."¹

It was the boomers, after all, who virtually created the "youth movement" in the 1960s and the "me" generation the following decade. Indeed, as Sheehy and others point out, the culture that shaped Valentine and his fellow baby boomers deplored the very idea of getting older.

While their parents listened to Frank Sinatra tell them to cope with old age by staying "young at heart," the generation that matured in the 1960s and '70s could not imagine getting old. Popular music of the day constantly reflected this attitude. In "My Generation," The Who's classic anthem to youth, Peter Townsend wrote, "I hope I die before I get old." Another '60s rock icon, Neil Young, sang, "It's better to burn out than to fade away."

Today, however, boomers like Valentine don't want to "die" or "burn out." They want to live, and live well. Indeed, aging to them represents a challenge, not inevitable decline. "I want to confront the aging process, make it a positive experience," Valentine says. "I want people to say: 'Turning 50 isn't so bad; look at Jim. I didn't know that 50 could be so cool.'"

The parents of boomers viewed aging differently, however. "I look at my parents and can see that they were middle-aged at my age," Valentine says. "But middle age is a concept I can't relate to."

Dan Perry, executive director of the Alliance for Aging Research, points out that Valentine's attitude is typical of people his age. "This is not a generation that says, 'It's God's will,' when they look at aging," he says.

Maddy Kent Dychtwald, a corporate consultant on the baby boom generation, agrees. "They are trying to bring their youth with them," she says, "and that's reflected in their attitudes as well as their behavior."

As proof of that proposition, Dychtwald notes recent polls indicating that boomers view old age as beginning roughly at 80. "For their parents, it's 51," she says.

But some observers say that for all their positive attitudes and concern about their health, baby boomers are trying too hard to stay young. "These are people who don't think they're going to die," says Alan Ehrenhalt, executive editor of *Governing* magazine and author of a 1995 book about Chicago in the 1950s, *The Lost City: The Forgotten Virtues of Community in America*. "And so, as they begin to age they become fanatical in their attempt to hang on to their youth."

According to this view, Americans who grew up in the 1960s and '70s

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*There are 78 million Americans in the baby boom generation, usually defined as Americans born between 1946 and 1964.

How Americans Feel About Aging

1. If it were possible, would you like to live to be 100 years old?

	1996	1992	1991
YES	61%	61%	66%
NO	32	34	29

2. At what age do you think someone becomes middle-aged?

Less than 40	5%
40	12
41-44	1
45	15
46-49	2
50	30
51-54	1
55	12
56-59	1
60	12
61 or older	7

3. At what age do you consider someone to be elderly?

Less than 60	4%
60	9
61-64	1
65	15
66-69	2
70	26
71-74	1
75	12
76-79	1
80	17
81 or older	8

4. As you grow older, how concerned are you about the following:

- *Becoming a financial burden on your children or other people*
- *Developing Alzheimer's, a disease that destroys a person's mental capabilities*
- *The loss of physical attractiveness*
- *Living for many years in a nursing home because of physical frailty or long-term illness*
- *Being lonely*
- *Having nothing to do*
- *Death*

	Very worried	Somewhat worried	Not worried
	18%	29%	53%
	24	32	43
	8	26	66
	33	31	36
	10	26	63
	10	16	74
	6	22	71

5. Which age group tends to be more . . . those under 50 years old or those over 50?

	Under 50	Over 50
• Generous	16%	75%
• Self-centered	75	17
• Greedy	76	15
• Stressed	79	16
• Fun to be with	55	28
• Complainers	51	40

Source: Alliance for Aging Research; poll conducted by Belden & Russonello Research and Communications, July 1996

Continued from p. 651

are not facing the natural process of getting older in a mature way. "This is a case of arrested development," says author Jeremy Rifkin, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends and a noted social commentator. "They've never, really, fully grown up."

Rifkin and others say that boomers who are feverishly fighting old age will miss the benefits and pleasures that should be enjoyed in life's later years, among them maturity and wisdom. "They will be doing themselves a disservice," he says, "because middle age and old age are different from youth, but just as rewarding."

In addition, some say that efforts to remain young will ultimately prove disappointing because they will ultimately fail. "These people are going to get hysterical," Russell says.

But others argue that attempting to stay young is healthy and should be encouraged. They say that concerns about diet and exercise, coupled with a youthful attitude, will ensure that millions of boomers will remain vigorous and self-sufficient well into old age.

"Sure, some narcissists will take it too far," Perry says. "But it's better to have a generation that tries to put off the indignities of old age than one that prematurely accepts them." He notes cultures where women wear black long after their husbands die, even if they are young. "That's the other side of this coin," Perry says, "and we don't want that."

Actually, Perry and others argue, boomers are not so much trying to stay young as to stay healthy. "This

is really about maintaining a good quality of life throughout life," says Judy Ernest, executive director of the Boomer Institute, a think tank in Cleveland, Ohio.

But why should boomers stop at just trying to have a healthy retirement and a few more years than their parents? Some observers say that available anti-aging therapies, when coupled with treatments yet to be

and 70s who are taking hGH and other things, and they're amazing in their youth and vitality," says Ronald Klatz, founder of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine and co-author of *Stopping the Clock: Why Many of Us Will Live Past 100 and Enjoy Every Minute*.

According to Klatz and others, hormones can help prolong not only the quantity but also the quality of life by increasing everything from muscle and bone mass to the thickness of skin.

But the National Institute on Aging (NIA) opposes the use of hormones as an anti-aging treatment, contending that their effectiveness and, more important, long-term side effects are not yet known.

"Frankly, we just don't know enough about any of these treatments to recommend their use," says Huber Warner, acting associate director of the NIA. Indeed, Warner says, some studies point to potentially serious side effects. For instance, Warner and others say, hGH use has been shown to lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and a number of other maladies.

Klatz and others counter that the NIA is behind the curve on hormone treatments, and that in the proper doses they are both effective and safe.

But even if anti-aging proponents are right about hormones and other treatments,

who is going to pay for them? Many anti-aging treatments are expensive (hGH costs up to \$15,000 per year) and generally are not covered by health insurers.

In recent months, the new anti-impotency drug Viagra has forced insurance companies to grapple with



Laser plastic surgery was used to remove this woman's wrinkles. (Before, top; after, bottom)

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

developed, will double boomers' life spans. Already, the relatively new field of anti-aging medicine is using human growth hormone (hGH), melatonin and other natural hormones to try to stop and even reverse the aging process (see p. 663).

"I've met many people in their 60s

The Boom in Aging Boomers

More than twice as many Americans 65 and older will be alive in 2050 as there were in 1996. The anticipated increase reflects the unprecedented size of the baby boom generation — people born from 1946-1964 — and likely advances in hygiene, nutrition and medical technology.



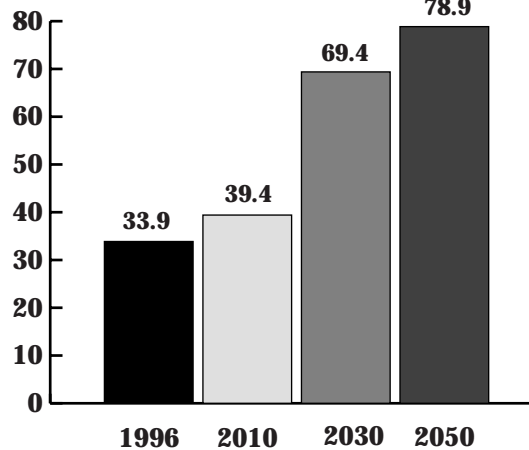
**U.S. Population to 2050
(in thousands)**

	1996	2010	2030	2050
All ages	265,253	297,716	346,899	393,931
Under age 5	19,403	20,012	23,066	27,106
5-13	34,809	65,605	41,588	47,805
14-17	15,167	16,894	18,788	21,207
18-24	24,616	30,138	31,826	36,333
25-34	40,374	38,292	42,744	49,366
35-44	43,311	38,521	44,263	47,393
45-54	32,341	43,564	38,897	43,494
55-64	21,360	35,283	36,348	42,368
65 and older	33,872	39,408	69,379	78,859
85 and older	3,747	5,671	8,455	18,223

U.S. Population, 65 and older



(in millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

the question of cost. While treating impotency is not the same as battling the effects of aging, both Viagra and hormones currently come under the heading of “lifestyle” drugs. To put it

another way, Viagra is seen as helping people lead better lives, but it is not necessary in the same way that insulin is for a diabetic.

Many insurers are offering limited

or no coverage for Viagra users, a policy that has, not surprisingly, sparked a number of lawsuits. But insurers argue that covering “lifestyle” drugs would lead to much higher

rates for everyone, especially if, as expected, new anti-aging therapies become more popular.

Jane Galvin, managed-care policy director at the American Health Insurance Association, is among those who argue that insurance coverage for anti-aging therapies will drive health-care costs into the stratosphere. "There seems to be a disconnect in our society between wanting benefits and being willing to pay the cost," she says.

But others say that many lifestyle drugs, such as anti-aging therapies, will pay off for insurers in the long term as people become healthier and spend less time in doctors' offices and hospitals. Similarly, physicians argue that maintaining a healthy lifestyle during adulthood will mean less likelihood of chronic diseases or disabilities in old age.

Insurers may continue to balk at paying for lifestyle drugs, but the baby boomers are not likely to stop looking for new ways to look and feel young. As the generation enters its sixth decade, here are some of the questions observers are asking:

Are baby boomers trying too hard to stay young?

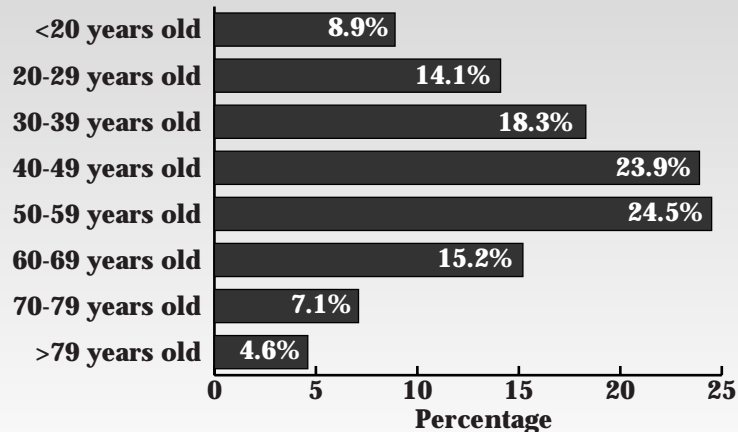
According to a new survey, roughly half of all baby boomers are "somewhat" or "very" concerned about aging. The same poll found that six out of 10 boomers have taken or are considering taking steps to fight Father Time.²

Indeed, baby boomers are fueling the enormous growth of industries that cater to helping people look and feel younger, from cosmetic surgeons to the makers of fitness machines to producers of anti-aging drugs and treatments. "True to the boomer ethos of having it all, this demographic bulge wants to enjoy the benefits of growing older while still retaining the vigor and vitality of youth," said Edward Keller, president of Roper Starch Worldwide, which

Facial Plastic Surgery Appeals to Middle-Aged

People ages 40-69 have more than 60 percent of all cosmetic facial plastic surgery performed in the United States.

Procedures Performed by Age



*Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding and a ±7.5% margin of error.
Source: American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; poll by Wirthlin Worldwide, August 1997*

conducted the poll.³

And "having it all" is growing much more likely, at least for a time. Many health experts are now saying that a lifetime of proper diet and exercise, coupled with continuing advances in medical technology, should give the average boomer a chance of living to 100, relatively free of pain and disability. Others claim anti-aging drugs will extend the average human life far beyond 100.

But some observers say that for all its concern about health, the baby boom generation is too obsessed with staying young. While there is nothing wrong with "clean living," the boomers are "definitely trying too hard to be young, to be youthful," says Rifkin of the Foundation on Economic Trends.

Rifkin finds attitudes toward youth evident in all spheres of boomer life. "Look at the way they dress, the way they act," he says. "It's like they're college kids."

Rifkin argues that such efforts to stay young are driven by Americans' collective desire to update themselves. "We now live in a culture that has replaced historical consciousness with therapeutic consciousness," he says. "The idea of time passing in your life has been replaced by a continual quest for self-improvement." In short, instead of accepting life's differing phases, boomers view their existence as a constant quest for self-betterment.

To *Governing's* Ehrenhalt, the boomers' obsession with youth suggests that, "It has never occurred to them that they are getting older. Their parents understood that you get old and die, but they don't think the normal rules apply to them. They're like a whole generation of Kennedies."

Regardless of what motivates boomers, many observers argue that their efforts to remain ever youthful will have a devastating psychological effect on their generation as their bodies and minds betray them in old

Cosmetic Surgery Is Just Another Weapon . . .

Every 7.7 seconds, a baby boomer in the United States turns 50. The generation that gave us Woodstock and disco music is getting on, and it's starting to show. Smooth faces and taut bodies are increasingly giving way to sagging chins, bulging thighs and baldness.

Polls indicate that a majority of boomers — contrary to their image as narcissistic children desperately clinging to their youth — accept the wrinkles, bulges and thinning hair as an inevitable part of aging. But a growing number are increasingly turning to cosmetic surgeons and others to restore at least some of their youthful appearance.

Plastic surgery was once reserved for movie stars and millionaires. But today cosmetic procedures are well within reach for most middle-class Americans. Average costs range from \$691 for a chemical peel to \$2,900 for a forehead lift and \$5,439 for a rhytidectomy or face lift to remove wrinkles.

Indeed, the nation may be at the beginning of a plastic surgery boom, fueled by shifts in demographics, attitudes and technology. And, like so many other past trends, boomers will lead the way.

Some would say that the boom has already begun. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2 million cosmetic procedures were performed in the United States last year, an increase of 75 percent over the last four years. Significantly, nearly half of the procedures were performed on people between the ages of 35 and 50.¹

"The largest number of consultations we do are with people ages 35 to 50," confirms Stephen W. Perkins, a

facial plastic surgeon in Indianapolis, Ind., and president-elect of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. "They look in the mirror one day and realize that they look more like their mom or dad and say, 'Wait a minute, that's not how I perceive myself.'"

Denise Thomas, a New York-based cosmetic-surgery consultant who helps people choose the right doctor, puts it a bit more bluntly: "A lot of the baby boomers have the money, and they are fighting like hell to stay young."²

Indeed, according to a 1997 Gallup Poll, one-third of all female baby boomers said they would "do whatever it takes to stay looking young." And men, who made up a tiny percentage of cosmetic-surgery patients a decade ago, are now warming to the idea of liposuction, eye lifts and other procedures.³

Many experts say that these trends reflect a fundamental change in public attitudes about cosmetic surgery. For one thing, plastic surgery is no longer considered as strange or vain as it once was. "Cosmetic surgery had a stigma in their parents' generation, but baby boomers have grown up with it . . . they consider it an investment in themselves," said Timothy Marten, a plastic surgeon in San Francisco.⁴

In addition, a lot of people get the surgery because they expect to live and work longer and don't want to be "old" for decades. Boomers "expect and want to be more active whether they choose to continue working or to 'reinvent' themselves during retirement," says Fritz E. Barton Jr., a clinical professor of plastic surgery at Texas Southwestern University.

age. "Ultimately, everybody is going to be very disappointed," says *Master Trend* author Russell.

Instead, Russell and others argue, boomers should approach aging as a natural part of living, not an enemy that needs to be combated at every turn.

"Aging, which is to say decline and decay, is natural," writes Jonathan Yardley, a columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winning book critic at *The Washington Post*. "It is not, as all these Hefner clones lining up for their jolts of Viagra would have us believe, an ailment, but an unavoidable process that has far more to it than loss and regret." To Yardley, acting one's age offers "riches and pleasures . . . most connected in one way or another with the lessons that

experience teaches."⁴

Rifkin agrees, adding that boomers who seek the fountain of youth will "become arrested in their development" because they're going to be continually trying to live at the same unrealistic age. "And so they'll miss the valuable passages in life that come with aging normally and won't have the wisdom to appreciate things in a different light when they get older."

But Yardley and Rifkin are criticized for taking a superficial view of the desire to look and feel younger.

"They're referring to the Hollywood stereotype of starlets who are trying to be 30 when they're really 60, and that's just not the way it is," Klatz says.

Trying to stay young is more about "optimal living" than anything else, he argues. People who try to stay and feel

young will be more mature than others because a longer and healthier life will allow them to learn and grow more. "This is about giving yourself the time to achieve mastery of your life, to explore and do all the things you want to do," he says.

"I see this trend as a positive thing," adds the Boomer Institute's Ernest. "If people really want to maintain a good quality of life and push the boundaries of aging, so what?"

Consultant Dychtwald also sees benefits in trying to remain young even if such efforts produce little more than a youthful outlook. "That's as important as everything else," she says. Even purely appearance-oriented treatments, like cosmetic surgery and hair replacement, are good, many say. "If it boosts your self-esteem, makes you feel good about

... In the Battle to Stay Youthful

Others point out that many people think they need to look good in order to get ahead. And, in our youth-obsessed society, looking good usually means looking young. Older boomers “come in and say, ‘I need to look young and fresh to compete these younger men and women at work,’” Perkins says.

In addition, boomers are being encouraged by plastic surgeons to have procedures done while they’re in their 40s or even 30s. “They’re saying, ‘If you do it before you really need it, then it will look more natural and last much longer,’” says Maddy Kent Dychtwald, a San Francisco consultant who specializes in the baby boom generation.

Growth in cosmetic procedures is also being fueled by new developments in technology. Plastic surgery no longer just means the traditional face lift — a procedure that can be very painful and not cheap. “They’re coming out with more techniques that are non-invasive and can be done in the office, cheaply and quickly,” says Vicki Joy, a spokeswoman for the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine in Chicago.

Less intrusive ways to fight aging include removing wrinkles with lasers and shoring up sagging skin with collagen injections.

Even the more involved procedures have become safer and easier. Liposuction, in which fat is literally sucked from inside the body, has been made less difficult through the use of ultrasound, which melts the fat and makes it easier to remove.

Another technique that has gained in popularity in recent

years is hair transplantation, which until recently produced mixed results and could be very painful. “It used to have the tendency not to look natural,” says Perkins, who does hair transplants as well as traditional cosmetic surgery. The problem, he says, was that clumps of implanted hair follicles had to be spaced apart in order to grow properly. “We called them corn rows.”

Today, Perkins says, “it looks much more natural because we’ve made huge advances in the procedure by figuring out ways to place hair closer together.” In addition, doctors use a combination of local anaesthesia and sedatives to better control the pain associated with hair transplants.

Cosmetic procedures are likely to become more and more common as affluent boomers enter middle age. “As long as there isn’t some sort of big economic downturn, I think the desire for these things will continue to grow,” Perkins says.

“You know,” he adds, “we spend an awful lot of time, effort and money on clothes, make-up and other things to make ourselves look good, and plastic surgery is just an extension of that.”

¹ Sharon Walsh, “Cosmetic Surgeons Are Getting a Lift From the Baby Boomers,” *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1998.

² Quoted in *ibid.*

³ Poll cited in Kim Lamb Gregory, “Price of Beauty: Look Within Before Going Under the Knife,” *Ventura County Star*, March 29, 1998.

⁴ Quoted in Lorna Fernandes, “Surgeons Help Boomers Look as Young as They Feel,” *San Francisco Business Times*, Feb. 6, 1998.

yourself, then it is helpful,” argues Ernest. (See graph, p. 655.)

And feeling good about yourself is vital, Dychtwald and Ernest say. “When you feel old and think of yourself as old, then you are old,” Ernest says. “Ultimately all of these efforts are about energy, vitality and behavior rather than wrinkles,” Dychtwald says.

Boomers don’t want to be something they’re not, goes this reasoning, but the best of what they already are. “Boomers don’t want to look 20, they want to look and feel good for their age,” Ernest says.

Should insurers pay for some or all of the cost of Viagra and other “lifestyle-enhancing” drugs?

Paul Sibley-Schreiber, a 51-year-

old psychotherapist from New York City, recently sued his medical insurance company, challenging its decision not to fully pay for Viagra prescriptions. “The first pill I took had a miraculous effect,” he said, shortly after filing the suit in federal court.⁵

Like other Viagra users, Sibley-Schreiber believes that insurers and medical providers have an obligation to help impotent men. But some insurers and managed-care providers, including Aetna/U.S. Healthcare, have refused to pay for any Viagra use. In fact, only half of all insurers have said that they will cover the new drug. And many of these companies are offering only limited coverage. Cigna Healthcare, for instance, is paying for only six Viagra pills per month.⁶

Among insurers, there is a general

consensus that most purely cosmetic treatments, like hair replacement or a face lift, should not be covered by medical insurance. “If plastic surgery were covered, we’d all go out and have it done,” says Vicki Joy, a spokeswoman for the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine.

But other so-called “lifestyle” drugs, like Viagra, have posed a new and difficult question for insurance companies: When is something necessary enough and important enough to warrant insurance coverage?

This fundamental question is likely to become much more important in the near future, as pharmaceutical companies bring out a plethora of new drugs designed to restore youth (or at least the appearance of it) and vigor to millions. For instance, a

number of hormones are being tested to determine if they reverse the aging process. Other drugs are being developed that aim to do everything from improve memory to promoting healthy sleep patterns.

Some anti-aging experts say that insurance companies should pay for many of these new “lifestyle” drugs. To begin with, they argue, many of the new treatments will keep people from getting sick, thus bringing the overall cost of health care down. “It’s a lot cheaper to keep them healthy now than to wait until they’re sick later,” Joy points out. For example, she says, suppose a new growth hormone treatment could keep a 40-year-old at age 30 physically. “This means that person will, on average, be healthier, which is much cheaper for insurance companies.

Joy and others also argue that in the near future, new drugs that restore vitality will be deemed essential for healthy people. In a sense, she argues, they will be like vaccines or cholesterol tests: not absolutely necessary but an accepted part of what the medical profession believes is desirable for good health.

Proponents of insuring lifestyle drugs, like Joy, argue that if these life-enhancing therapies are not covered, only the rich will be able to afford them. This in turn will lead to two health-care systems, or even three: for people without insurance; for those with insurance; and for those with the financial wherewithal to afford anti-aging and other lifestyle drugs.

But many insurance companies contend that covering Viagra and the flood of lifestyle drugs that will be released in the coming decades will have dire consequences for the majority of Americans with private health insurance. “Unless people are willing to accept additional insurance costs, they can’t have everything they want,” says Galvin of the American Health Insurance Association. “People seem to think they deserve it and someone else will pay the cost.”

Galvin argues that if the cost of health

insurance increases due to coverage of lifestyle drugs, the burden could be shared by everyone. And that means that insurance could become prohibitively expensive for working- and lower-middle-class people who already having trouble keeping themselves and their families covered. “It’s quite simple, really: The higher the cost of medical insurance, the fewer insured people there will be,” Galvin says.

Others argue that covering non-necessary treatments, like anti-aging drugs, would lead to unfathomable increases in health-care spending. “Imagine if insurance companies and managed-care providers were to pay for lifestyle drugs,” Russell says. “Everyone would want them, and spending would become out of control.”

But many think that regardless of what the insurance companies want, they eventually will have to pay for a host of what are considered lifestyle drugs, especially those that halt or reverse aging. “They’ll be forced to because the public clamor for these things is going to be overwhelming,” claims Klatz. “I mean, look at how they’re demanding [coverage for] Viagra. Imagine what it’s going to be like when they learn all about stuff that can make you look and feel younger.”

Galvin agrees that like any business, insurers and health-care organizations will provide for those lifestyle drugs that are demanded by the majority of the public. “If it becomes the standard, if it’s embraced by society, then we’ll cover it,” she says. ■

BACKGROUND

Birth of the Boomers

Traditionally, demographers define the so-called baby-boom generation as those born between 1946

and 1964. During these 18 years, the United States experienced unparalleled population growth.

The boom in births was precipitated by two factors. First, World War II had ended in triumph in 1945, allowing an entire generation of men to return home. Overwhelmingly, they returned after years of service with a yearning to settle down and start a family. As a result, the number of marriages in the United States doubled from 1945 to 1946, to more than 2.2 million. This boom in matrimony was given a boost by the economic prosperity that characterized the years following the war. The flourishing economy meant that jobs were plentiful and wages were rising, allowing people who wanted children to afford to have them.

In 1946, 3.4 million babies were born in the United States, or 20 percent more than the previous year. By 1952 the number of births had risen to more than 3.9 million. Two years later, the annual total topped 4 million for the first time in U.S. history and stayed above that number for the next decade. At the peak of the boom in the late 1950s and early ’60s, the number of births exceeded 4.3 million.⁷

Growing up in the prosperous America of the 1950s and ’60s had a profound impact on the boomer generation. For the first time, a majority of the nation’s children were being raised in comfortable households. The nation’s new, widespread affluence allowed parents to provide things for their children — cars, trips and higher education — that previously had been reserved largely for a privileged few.

Parents also indulged their children psychologically and emotionally in a new way. These were the “Spock” babies, raised on Dr. Benjamin Spock’s child-rearing methods, which encouraged parents to be affectionate with their sons and daughters, and have fun with them. No longer to be seen and not heard, children were increasingly perceived as individuals and encouraged to think and speak for themselves.

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Chronology

1945-1964

Post-war optimism coupled with economic prosperity leads to a birth explosion in the United States.

1945

World War II ends, and millions of servicemen return home.

1946

The number of couples marrying doubles, to 2.2 million. The number of births in the United States also increases by 20 percent, to 3.4 million. Dr. Benjamin Spock publishes *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*.

1954

For the first time in U.S. history, more than 4 million babies are born.

1956

Elvis Presley appears on the Ed Sullivan Show.

1964-1972

The first members of the baby boom generation go to college, leading to the Youth Movement.

1964

The Beatles arrive in the United States. Congress passes the Tonkin Gulf resolution in August, authorizing a de facto escalation of the war in Vietnam.

1967

James Bedford becomes the first person to be cryonically frozen.

1968

Anti-war protests erupt at campuses across the United States.

1969

An estimated 400,000 people arrive at a farm in Woodstock, N.Y., for a three-day rock concert.

1970

Four students protesting the Vietnam War are shot and killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State University, setting off a new round of campus protests.

1972

U.S. troops pull out of Vietnam.

1973-1989

The Youth Movement fades. Boomers become more focused on having fun and making money.

1973

The Arab oil embargo throws the country into a recession.

1978

Disco music reaches its peak.

1980

Conservative standard-bearer Ronald Reagan is elected president.

1986

The Alliance for Aging Research is founded.

1990-2011

The first baby boomers begin to enter middle age.

1993

The American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine is founded.

1995

A study commissioned by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) finds that people in their fifties — far from resting on their laurels and planning on retirement — consider the decade a challenging and even turbulent period in their lives.

1996

The first baby boomers, including President Clinton, turn 50.

1997

More than 700,000 Americans have some sort of cosmetic surgery procedure done, almost twice as many as were performed in 1992.

1998

The anti-impotency drug Viagra becomes one of the nation's best-selling prescription medications.

2000

Life expectancy in the United States is expected to approach 80.

2011

The first members of the baby boom generation will turn 65.

A Primer on 'Anti-Aging' Hormones

Hormones are substances produced by the body that help to regulate bodily functions. As humans age, levels of some of these substances — like estrogen — begin to decrease. Now a number of doctors and others are claiming that the aging process can be slowed or even reversed by replacing hormones that are lost through aging. These anti-aging proponents point to the thousands of middle-aged and elderly people who have restored one or more of these hormones and now look and feel years younger.

But the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and many mainstream groups warn that there is no conclusive research showing that hormone supplements can affect the aging process. In addition, they say, artificial hormones are powerful chemicals that can cause damaging side effects.

Here are some of the most widely used laboratory-produced hormones and the possible benefits and side effects of taking them:

DHEA — Naturally produced by the adrenal glands, perched atop the kidneys, DHEA may not actually be a hormone. But when broken down by the body it becomes estrogen and testosterone. After about age 30, the body begins producing less DHEA, and some anti-aging proponents claim that replacing it will improve vitality and natural immunity. But according to the NIA, DHEA may cause liver damage.

Estrogen — Millions of women take estrogen to relieve symptoms associated with menopause, a treatment widely accepted by the mainstream medical community. Studies

have found that estrogen replacement significantly lowered risk for menopausal women of heart disease, osteoporosis and possibly Alzheimer's disease, while making many look and feel younger. The same studies also found an increased risk for breast and uterine cancers among those taking the hormone.

Human Growth Hormone (hGH) — Many anti-aging specialists consider hGH to be the best hormone supplement currently available in the fight against aging. Some small studies have shown that taking hGH can increase muscle mass and bring everything from increased energy to renewed sexual potency to those who take it. The hormone, which is made in the pituitary gland just below the brain, regulates human growth. It also is crucial in organ and tissue development. Very short children are often given hGH, with positive results. But the NIA argues that healthy adults should not take the hormone because it has been shown to cause problems ranging from diabetes to heart failure.

Melatonin — Many people take extra melatonin, which is naturally produced in the brain's pineal gland, to help them sleep regularly. Others claim it boosts the immune system and can slow the aging process. But the NIA says that there is no solid evidence to support these claims. In addition, the institute says, melatonin supplements, which are widely available in drug stores, can lead to drowsiness, confusion and headaches.

Sources: National Institute on Aging, American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine

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Many see this period in American social history as a "great awakening," when outmoded taboos were thrown off, and a more rational approach to child-rearing was adopted. But others argue that these new methods did not have entirely positive results. "The boomers have an 'I deserve' mentality that their parents instilled in them by telling them they were special all the time," Dychtwald says.

The Youth Movement

But the baby boom generation was influenced by more than just its

home life. All of American culture was adjusting to meet the needs of this huge new group of young people. In the movies, actors like James Dean ("Rebel Without a Cause," 1955) and Marlon Brando ("On the Waterfront," 1954) portrayed young men fighting against the stifling world of their elders.

Around the same time, music began to radically change. While kids growing up in the 1940s and early '50s were dancing to the likes of Sinatra and Doris Day, those who started listening to music in the mid-'50s began with Elvis Presley, who was considered so controversial that when he appeared on Ed Sullivan's popular variety TV show, the camera didn't show his sensual gyrations. Presley, though in

many ways respectful of religion and his country, owed at least some of his immense popularity to his bad-boy image, his willingness to defy sexual conventions.

Adolescents and their younger brothers and sisters would move from Elvis to the "Beatles" and "Rolling Stones" and finally to the psychedelic rock of the late 1960s, popularized by Jimi Hendrix and groups like "The Doors" and "Jefferson Airplane." With each new musical phase, societal norms that had been commonplace in the 1940s and '50s, like unquestioning patriotism and the evils of illegal narcotics, were further challenged.

In 1964, the first generation born

after World War II entered college. In August of that year, Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf resolution, escalating the nation's involvement in Vietnam. In short, just as the first baby boomers were becoming eligible for college, and the draft, the government was gearing up for a new war.

Contrary to modern impressions, polls show that most Americans — including youths — supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam throughout most of the 1960s. Still, student activism against the war played an important role in turning around public opinion and political support for the war. By 1968, boomers were taking over college campuses across the country to protest the war and other issues. That same year, President Lyndon B. Johnson decided not to run for re-election, largely because of the war opposition he had fomented.

The anti-war movement reached its peak in 1969, when hundreds of thousands of boomers congregated in Washington at a massive rally for peace, and then at Woodstock, N.Y., for the outdoor rock concert that became the quintessential “’60s” event.

The following year, still more people were galvanized by the shooting deaths of four students by National Guardsmen at an anti-Vietnam War protest at Kent State University in Ohio. But the aftermath of Kent State was the movement's last hurrah. After the war in Vietnam was over, the country, worn out by the upheaval of the past decade, looked for some sort of return to normalcy.

But the impact of the student move-

ment on the baby boom generation was profound. For even though only a small percentage of boomers actually participated in the rallies, the sit-ins and concerts, they nonetheless had changed the nation. The generation had tasted a kind of power that their less rebellious parents and grandparents had never known.

In addition, many of the kids who had sat on the sidelines felt at least a certain kinship with those in the trenches. As journalist Landon Y. Jones writes: “The actual attendance

use of illegal drugs, heretofore confined to the fringes of society, went mainstream.

Redefining Middle Age

The student protest movement of the 1960s established boomers as generational trend-setters. Since then, they've largely been lauded (or blamed) for the “’60s,” the “me” decade and the yuppie years of the '80s.

Indeed, many boomers pursued having fun during the disco years and money-making '80s with the same single-minded gusto that they exhibited during their attempts to “save the world” in the 1960s. Some see this self-absorbing energy as the key to understanding the generation and its attitudes.

“Boomers always grab hold of every phase of life they're in and assume that everyone else realizes that it's the best phase of life to be in,” says demographics consultant Bill Strauss, co-author of *Generations* and *The Fourth Turning*, which explore the interplay of age groups in American society.

Now boomers are entering a new life phase and many, like Strauss, say that the generation that redefined what it meant to be young will do the same for our perception of middle and old age. In fact, Dychtwald says, “The baby boomers have already redefined what it means to be young today. The youth culture now ex-



©PhotoDisc

Millions of Americans take anti-aging hormones, but the National Institute on Aging cautions that their long-term effects are unknown.

at Woodstock was less than half a million, but twice as many would later claim they'd been there. And many millions more felt as if they'd been there.”⁸ In other words, Woodstock and the other events surrounding the student movement were for boomers what World War II had been for their parents: a defining experience.

That experience was created by more than just political activism and music. Boomers also broke new ground on a more personal level by casting aside their parents' rules on dating and mating, embracing the nascent sexual revolution. And the

Cryonics: Promising Life After Death

It sounds like science fiction: Freeze people immediately after they have died and then revive them when medical science has discovered the cure for whatever killed them.

Until 1964, cryonics was indeed squarely in the realm of sci-fi. Then physics Professor Robert Ettinger argued in *The Prospect of Immortality* that cryonics was possible. Three years later, 73-year-old James H. Bedford, a 73-year-old psychology professor who had died of kidney cancer, became the first human being to be frozen.

There are now four known cryonics facilities, all in the United States. So far, 73 Americans — including Ettinger's first wife and mother — have been frozen. Another estimated 500 people in the U.S. and another 300 from abroad have signed up to be cryogenically preserved after death.¹

With so few customers, cryonics isn't quite a booming business yet. But supporters say that widespread acceptance is on the horizon. "There's a huge market there," says physician Art Quaipe, president of Trans Time, a California-based cryonics company. "All we have to do is convince people that this is desirable."²

But it may be a hard sell. According to a January 1997 ABC News poll, only 7 percent of Americans would consider cryonics.

There are also some technical problems to overcome. Bodies may be easy to freeze, but none have been thawed. And, most biologists say, there little to suggest that they can be.

Scientists have succeeded in freezing single cells, like sperm, and bringing them back to life. Even small clusters of cells, like embryos, can be frozen and reanimated. "The problem comes when you start freezing large blocks of tissue," says Ken Hobbs, a physician at the Royal Free Hospital in London, England.

The "problem," Hobbs and others say, is that when a lot of cells are frozen together, water between them expands

into ice crystals, rupturing their membranes. While some studies with frozen rat hearts have shown promise, most evidence suggests that organs, not to mention complete bodies, are unrevivable, at least for the time being.

Still, cryonics proponents are optimistic that science will overcome the problems with reanimation and other hurdles. "If the present pace of science keeps up, we might understand the whole thing over the next couple of centuries," said artificial intelligence pioneer and cryonics booster Marvin Minsky.³

Preparing a body for cryonic storage is a time-consuming and complicated process. First, the blood must be flushed out and replaced with fluids that aid in the freezing process. Then, the body is slowly frozen over a 20-day period before being placed in a container filled with liquid nitrogen, which keeps it at a constant temperature of -320 degrees F.

Some who opt for cryonic storage have only their heads frozen, the assumption being that in the far future science will be able to replicate everything but the brain — hence the need only for the head. With less to freeze and store, a head is cheaper than a whole body.

Still, freezing even a head can be an expensive proposition. CryoSpan, a California firm, charges about \$60,000. Complete bodies cost twice as much.⁴

¹ Clint O'Connor, "Putting Death on Ice," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 15, 1997.

² *Ibid.*

³ Quoted in Gerry Byrne, "Connected: Immortality," *The Daily Telegraph*, Jan. 22, 1998.

⁴ Ed Brown, "Would You Pay \$125,000 to Get Frozen?" *Fortune*, Nov. 24, 1997.

tends into the 40s."

The Alliance for Aging Research's Perry agrees. "Middle age will never be thought of as middle age again after the baby boomers have passed through this period," he says. "People used to think of middle age as a prelude to climbing into the rocking chair. No more."

Many are actually climbing mountains. And many think that they, not the youth, are living in the best of times. "I think there are as many young people who envy us as we who envy them," Valentine says.

But others argue that boomers are

fooling themselves if they think they're going to remain young and hip or that the culture will change drastically to suit their new image of themselves. "Youth is beauty, and that will never change," Russell says. "The image of what we perceive as good-looking or hip people will expand to include some people who are older than 20, but not that much."

William Dinges, a professor of religious studies at The Catholic University of America, agrees. "Youth is a powerful current in our society," he says, "and that won't change."

But others, while agreeing that wrinkles will never be "in," say that advertisers and other bellwethers of the national psyche have expanded their use of well-preserved middle-aged and older people.

"Look at all the major modeling agencies," Klatz says. "They all have senior models who have that Lauren Bacall look." The reason, Klatz and others say, is that the nearly 80 million members of the baby boom generation are too big a market to ignore, and they don't want to look at anorexic 18-year-olds all the time. ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Fighting to Stay Young

Like many other trends in the United States, baby boomers helped to create the diet and exercise craze that first appeared in the 1970s. Today, more and more boomers see proper nutrition and fitness as a way not only to live longer but also better.

In fact, gerontologists John W. Rowe and Robert Kahn argue in their book *Successful Aging* that lifestyle choices — particularly exercise and a good diet — more than genetics or chance will determine how well and how long we live.

And boomers are being told by everyone from their doctors to the media that good eating and exercise habits cannot be put off until retirement. Regular exercise, for instance, helps to stave off the natural degenerative effects of aging. This decline begins after about age 30, when the metabolism starts to slow down and muscle and bone mass begin decreasing. At about age 40, these changes start to take their toll, with both men and women becoming more susceptible to gaining weight — especially around the waist and thighs. More important, if unchecked, this natural degeneration can lead to frailty later in life.⁹

Good eating habits are also crucial, health experts say. Indeed, a mountain of research suggests that a diet low in fat and heavy on fruits, vegetables and grains can help prevent killers like cancer and heart disease.

Hence the new interest in nutrition and fitness is not surprising. And

it is reflected in dramatic increases in the sales of products and services that aim to keep people fit and trim. Health clubs and health-oriented food and nutrition outlets, like Fresh Fields and General Nutrition Centers (GNC), are proliferating at an unprecedented rate. And, sales of health-related products are soaring. For instance, since 1992, sales of fitness equipment in the United States have nearly doubled from \$1.6 billion to an estimated \$3.1 billion in 1998. Much of this increase is due to boomers, according to a report issued earlier this year by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association.¹⁰

At the same time, sales of vitamin and mineral supplements are increasing even more rapidly. In the last year alone, food, drug and discount stores have reported a 21.8 percent increase in vitamin sales and a 44.1 percent rise in purchases of mineral supplements. Much of the growth is coming from boomers, experts say.¹¹ In addition, mainstream supermarket chains like Safeway and A&P are stocking more organic (grown without pesticides) produce and all-natural, low-fat products. According to Mike Rourke, a spokesman for A&P, boomers are the impetus behind the new trend as well.¹²

And boomers will become even more interested in better diet and nutrition as they care for aging parents with chronic and debilitating diseases. "Absolutely, it has an impact on the way you think, in the sense that you want to take better care of yourself," said John Sumner, a 52-year-old factory manager from Wilmington, Del., whose mother died in 1994 after years in failing health.¹³

"Boomers know they're going to die," says Joy of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine. "But they want to look and feel good while they're alive instead of spending their final years in a nursing home like so many people do today."

Still, all the news about boomers is not good. While an unprecedented number of them are trying to eat right and exercise, the majority are not. For instance, the average person between the ages of 35 and 49 consumes nearly 40 percent of his or her calories in fat, almost twice the necessary level. In addition, the desire for convenience, whether it be fast food, frozen dinners or takeout food, leaves eight out of 10 boomers without the essential minerals, vitamins and other substances needed for a balanced diet, says Udo Erasmus, author of *Fats That Heal; Fats That Kill*.¹⁴ Finally, according to surveys conducted by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other organizations, only about one-third of all boomers engage in regular exercise.

'Anti-Aging' Drugs

"A 50-year-old college instructor regains the face and figure of her modeling days. A 43-year-old, balding, enervated man finds both his hair and energy restored. A senior citizen recovers his interest in sex — and reports that his penis size has grown by 20 percent."¹⁵ These are just some of the amazing claims made by those who have taken human growth hormone (hGH), a substance that many say stops and even reverses the effects of aging.

Indeed, hGH has been hailed by some, among them Klatz, as a fountain of youth waiting to be exploited. "It is only one of hundreds of therapies in the anti-aging arsenal, but it's the most dramatic one we have," says Klatz, co-author of the 1997 book *Grow Young with hGH*.

Among other things, Klatz says, hGH increases the body's muscle mass, while decreasing levels of fat.

In addition, he says, the hormone improves one's level of energy and generally gives those who take it a more youthful appearance. And, Klatz claims, "these long-term positive results are holding up."

Klatz and other proponents of hGH point to a 1994-96 study of 202 people, mostly men, between 39 and 74 conducted by L. Cass Terry and Edmund Chein of the Medical College of Wisconsin and Palm Springs' Life Extension Institute, respectively. They found that 88 percent of those who took hGH reported an increase in muscle strength. In the same group, 72 percent said they experienced a decrease in body fat; 61 percent claimed a reduction in wrinkles; and 75 percent had an increase in sexual potency.¹⁶

HGH is just one of a number of hormonal and other treatments that anti-aging doctors like Klatz are excited about. Others include DHEA, a substance produced by the adrenal glands, melatonin, a hormone made in the brain's pineal gland and what are known as the male and female hormones, testosterone and estrogen.

"We find these treatments work best when taken together," Klatz says, adding that the combined therapy can greatly enhance both quality and quantity of life. "These therapies are just short of a miracle," he contends.

Some of these treatments, like hGH, melatonin and estrogen, have been hailed by some experts as promising wonder drugs. But the National Institute on Aging's Warner and others worry that knowledge of these new "anti-aging therapies" is too limited to even consider their use at this time. "Our feeling is that there might be some validity to some of the claims about hGH and other [hormone therapies], but we don't know enough yet to recommend them to the public," he says.

In the case of hGH, Warner says, there is some indication that it makes patients "feel better and improves

muscle mass." But, he says, there are also side effects associated with the hormone, like diabetes, high blood pressure and possibly even heart failure. "We think this is very risky, that it can possibly do more harm than good," he says.

Warner and others argue that the scientific community needs more time to study the long-term effects of hGH and the other anti-aging hormones in order to determine both their effectiveness and safety. "We're funding a number of studies on hGH right now," he says.

In the meantime, the NIA recommends that people looking for anti-aging treatments stay away from hGH and other hormones. "The terrible thing about some of these things, like DHEA and melatonin, is that you can buy them at your local supermarket and start taking it," Warner says. That's because hormones are naturally occurring substances and hence not subject to the same regulation as would a new drug. "People, in essence, can become their own test subjects," he adds. And, he points out, with hGH the situation is even more ominous due to the great expense associated with the therapy. "People pay up to \$15,000 a year for these treatments," he says.

But Klatz counters that NIA is "too conservative" in its assessment of these hormones. "NIA is creating an unnecessary hysteria because when hGH is given in [proper] doses, there have been virtually no side effects."

Of course, he says, like anything else, hGH can be dangerous if not administered properly. "Aspirin can cause you to bleed to death [internally] if you take too much of it," he says. But, Klatz says, doctors have known for a long time what a safe dosage is. And, when taken properly, hGH and the other hormones are fine.

For example, Klatz says, in the Terry/Chein hGH study, the subjects have suffered no unusual side ef-

fects. "There have been a few cases of prostate cancer in the group, but that's to be expected with men this age," he says. In addition, he claims, people have been taking hGH for a long time without trouble. "Strength athletes have been taking hGH precursors for 20 years," he says. "If this were so dangerous, the streets would be littered with the bodies of young people."

But, Warner says, Klatz's enthusiasm for anti-aging therapies is causing him to lose sight of the bigger picture. "He loves to beat on the government for being stodgy and too conservative and keeping this wonderful stuff from the people for no good reason," he says. But those who administer hGH, DHEA and other hormones to their patients "ought to be more cautious, because whatever they think, they can't know for sure that they are safe and effective." ■

OUTLOOK

150 Years Young?

The life expectancy for an average American today is about 76. But it is widely thought that life expectancy will rise for the baby boomers and those generations that follow. Some experts predict a dramatic increase.

If recent history is any guide, average ages should soar. In 1900, the average American lived to be 47. Then came better hygiene, nutrition and medical advances (especially the development of antibiotics).

Still, some say that the greatest strides in life expectancy have already been made, and that while things will get better for boomers,

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At Issue:

Are baby boomers trying too hard to stay young?

ROBERTSON DAVIES

Canadian author who died in 1995

FROM THE MERRY HEART (1997).

We live in an age when the care of physical health has attained almost to the stature of a religion.

People eat extraordinary and disagreeable foods and dose themselves with pills and supplements to ensure the uttermost perfection of healthy diet. They flog themselves to the most distressing exertions, hoping thereby to bully their bodies into some sort of exaggerated well-being. Creature comforts hallowed by centuries of acceptance as friends to man are now condemned as vile indulgences, harmful to the standers-by, harmful to the unborn, noxious and disgusting as well as ruinously expensive. It appears as though everybody under the age of 50 were convinced that by making their lives unbearable, they might extend their existence forever. Yes, it really seems as if they hoped that they might never die.

But what kind of lives are they thus preserving? Are they happy? Are they fun to be with? Are they wise? Do their contemporaries and their children hold them in high respect? Very often these questions must be answered with a resounding No! As Henry Thoreau said a century and a half ago, the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. If he were living today, he would have to amend that statement to include women, who can be every bit as desperate as their brothers. As they jog and diet their way among us, the faces of such people are masks of despair. Do you want to join them?

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RONALD KLATZ, M.D.

President, American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine

WRITTEN FOR THE CQ RESEARCHER, JULY 1998.

Sure Robertson, let's forget about diet, exercise, leading a healthy lifestyle. Instead, let's embrace the hedonistic Emperor Nero-style philosophy of live fast, die young and leave a pretty corpse behind. It is easy to cavalierly rail against the anti-aging lifestyle. But it only takes your first heart attack, stroke or tumor to change that tune.

Who ever said anti-aging medicine was for ascetics, monks or masochists? Our goal is maximum quality as well as maximum quality of life. Anti-aging medicine is about freedom — to choose our destiny, our paths in life in a society free from the fear of a slow, lingering disease or premature death, the freedom to choose just how long and well we wish to live. Anti-aging medicine is helping to create a new paradigm of health care for the next millennium, from today's disease-oriented model to an aggressive, preventative one.

We do not yet "live in an age when the care of physical health has attained almost to the stature of a religion." Statistics show that more people than ever lead sedentary lifestyles, reflected in the mortality statistics of the top killers: heart disease, obesity and diabetes. Perhaps if we did live in a time where everybody were obsessed with maintaining optimum health, our nation would be filled with wise, happy, fun-to-be-with healthy people.

Mastery in this world is simply an equation of ability/time. With enough time and effort all of us can accomplish fantastic and beautiful things. Unfortunately, most people are cut down prematurely in life by the diseases of aging. Imagine an ageless society where it is perfectly OK to spend your first 30 years as a world traveler before even starting to consider what you would actually do for a living. One would be easily able to slip back and forth between leisure time and the working world because even at age 105 one would look, feel and think as well as any typically athletic healthy 55-year-old.

Such a future is within our grasp, and 50 percent of the baby boomers alive today will live to see it.

If 20 minutes per day of exercise, driving a car of at least 2,900 pounds, wearing a seat belt, avoiding cigarettes and fatty foods and HIV-positive sexual partners, and downing 10 to 20 vitamin tablets with meals two times per day is too much for you wild and crazy guys to stomach . . . in the immortal words of Steve Martin, "Well, excuse me!" I choose to live *long*, and well.

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they will not get that much better. “Oh, most of them will make it into their 80s, but they’ll still begin to go downhill at that time, just like people do today,” says Jurg Siegenthaler, a professor of sociology at American University.

Boomer expert Russell tends to agree. “I don’t think life expectancy will rise much more,” she says, “but quality of life will improve.” But while boomers will have a more active and fun retirement than their parents, “most of them will still be dead in 50 years,” she says.

A majority of experts on aging, however, are more optimistic about boomers’ chances to live substantially longer than their parents. “I think it will be common for people to live into their 90s or to 100,” NIA’s Warner says.

That trend may already be beginning. Indeed, as of last year, there were about 61,000 people who are 100 years or older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, 4 million Americans are currently over 85, almost twice the number in 1980. And the numbers are expected to increase dramatically. In fact, according to the bureau, centenarians are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population and will number 214,000 by the year 2020.¹⁷

Still, for all their optimism, Warner and others say that significant increases past the age of 90 or 100 are unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. “I don’t see a lot of people living to be 120 any time soon,” he says.

Warner’s choice of 120 is not a random or even half-educated guess. It turns out that 120 is something of a magic number in the aging community. For one thing, there are no records of human beings living much past 120 years. In fact, the oldest confirmed life span is 122 years.*

*Some people have claimed to be over 130, but no birth records exist to prove their claims.

More important, aging scientists have long believed that the human body is not genetically programmed to function much past 120 years, even under optimum conditions. “Living beyond 120 years is going to involve overriding the genetic program, and we currently aren’t even close to knowing how to do that,” says Perry of the Alliance for Aging Research.

But an increasing number of scientists and others are arguing that reaching or surpassing 120 may not be the near impossible hurdle that many say it is. “I think it’s a reasonable expectation that we’ll be able to live 150 years or more,” Klatz says.

Klatz and others believe that in the coming decades medical science will make scourges like heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer’s disease little more than bad memories — much as influenza and smallpox are today.¹⁸ In addition, they say, our understanding of aging will increase enough to allow researchers to stop and even reverse the aging process.

“You have to remember, our medical knowledge doubles every three and a half years, which means that in 20 years we’ll know 64 times more than we do today,” Klatz says.

Others also are optimistic. “We’re getting to the takeoff point where these technologies are going to start bearing fruit,” says Ken Manton, a professor of demographics at Duke University.¹⁹

Indeed, in recent years researchers have learned how to bypass a built-in limit on the number of times each human cell can divide. In addition, scientists are learning more and more about the genes that affect and control human longevity. Some speculate that some day genetic tinkering will allow doctors to “turn off” or “reinstruct” those genes that direct aging.

This prospect was reinforced last month, when researchers at the University of Guelph in Canada trans-

planted a human gene that helps protect cells into fruit flies and extended their natural lives by 40 percent. The experiment “speaks very optimistically for our ability to directly intervene into the aging process in other higher animals, including humans,” says Tom Johnson, a professor at the Institute for Behavioral Genetics at the University of Colorado in Boulder.²⁰

Scientists are also looking into other means to slow the aging process. In the technique known as caloric restriction, normal caloric intake is reduced by about 30 percent. In laboratory experiments, mice subjected to reduced-calorie diets lived about one-third longer than those on regular diets.

While humans aren’t expected to make such sacrifices willingly, researchers are hopeful that once they discover why caloric restriction works, they will be able to simulate it in humans, possibly prolonging boomers’ lives by an extra 30 or even 50 years.

But for all the potential scientific miracles on the horizon, many experts argue that efforts to expand the quantity of life must be accompanied by corresponding improvements in life’s quality. As Catholic University’s Dinges and other researchers point out, people today live longer than their parents, but “there’s also a longer period of misery” before many people die.

They warn that keeping people alive by using miraculous, life-extending technology can be a double-edged sword.

“We assume it will be all right,” he says, “because no one ever thinks of it as happening to themselves.”

Perry agrees that the focus needs to be on the health and self-sufficiency of boomers when they reach old age, not simply extending their life span no matter the impact on quality of life. “Our efforts should be at keeping people healthy through their 70s, 80s and 90s,” he says, not just keeping them alive. ■

Notes

¹ Quoted in Pat Bruce, "Forever Young: Baby Boomers Growing Old With Health and Grace," *Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine*, October 1997.

² "Aging Boomers Refuse to Age, New Roper Survey Shows," *Business Wire*, May 8, 1998; Roper Starch Worldwide conducted the poll.

³ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴ Jonathan Yardley, "From the Pharmacy, Faux Fountains of Youth," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1998.

⁵ Quoted in Helen Peterson, "Man File Suit vs. Insurers on Viagra," *Daily News*, May 19, 1998.

⁶ "Insurers Urged to Cover Birth Control; Paying for Viagra Shows Double Standard, Planned Parenthood Says," *The Dallas Morning News*, May 20, 1998; "Is Sex a Necessity?" *Time*, May 11, 1998.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*.

⁸ Jones, Landon Y., *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (1980), p. 115.

⁹ Bill Hendrick, "Fighting Middle-Aged Spread," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 13, 1997. For background, see "Dieting and Health," *The CQ Researcher*, April 14, 1995, pp. 321-344.

¹⁰ Figures cited in "Older Americans Still Active; Big Business for Fitness Industry," *The Maturing Marketplace*, April 1, 1998. For background, see "Physical Fitness," *The CQ Researcher*, Nov. 6, 1992, pp. 953-976.

¹¹ Laura Liebeck, "Welcoming the Wellness Generation," *Discount Store News*, May 11, 1998. For background, see "Dietary Supplements," *The CQ Researcher*, July 8, 1994, pp. 577-600.

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Alliance for Aging Research, 2021 K St. N.W., Suite 305, Washington, D.C. 20006; (202) 293-2856; www.agingresearch.org
The alliance promotes medical and social research in an effort to improve the quality of life for the elderly.

American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, 1341 W. Fullerton, Suite 111, Chicago, Ill. 60614; (773) 528-4333; www.worldhealth.net
Founded in 1993, the academy includes doctors, scientists and others dedicated to slowing, stopping or even reversing the aging process.

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 310 S. Henry St., Alexandria, Va. 22314; (703) 299-9291; The academy promotes research and public education on facial plastic and reconstructive surgery.

National Institute on Aging, 31 Center Dr., MSC-2292, #5C35, Bethesda, Md. 20892; (301) 496-9265; www.nih.gov/nia. NIA, part of the National Institutes of Health, conducts and funds research on many aspects of the aging process.

The Boomer Institute, One Erieview Plaza, 7th Floor, Cleveland, Ohio 44114; (330) 468-0536. The institute conducts research into the impact that aging baby boomers are having on American society.

¹² Mary Ellen LoBosco, "More Bang from Boomers," *Supermarket News*, May 11, 1998.

¹³ Quoted in Irene Sege, "The Aging of Aquarius," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 1998. For background, see Mary H. Cooper, "Caring for the Elderly," *The CQ Researcher*, Feb. 20, 1998, pp. 145-168.

¹⁴ Quoted in Alison Ashton, "The Winners and Losers of Exercise," *Copley News Service*, March 2, 1998.

¹⁵ Ronald Klatz and Robert Goldman, *Stopping the Clock: Why Many of Us Will Live Past 100 — And Enjoy Every Minute* (1996).

¹⁶ Ronald Klatz and Carol Kahn, *Grow Young with HGH* (1997), p. 36.

¹⁷ Statistics cited in Bob LaMendola, "Stretching the Limit," *The Orange County Register*, Dec. 3, 1997.

¹⁸ For background, see Adriel Bettelheim, "Alzheimer's Disease," *The CQ Researcher*, May 15, 1998, pp. 433-456.

¹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁰ Quoted in "Extra Gene Lets Fly Live Longer," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 1998.

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Selected Sources Used

Books

Jones, Landon Y., *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation*, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980.

Jones provides an engaging and well-written chronicle of the baby boom generation. While the book is dated, it contains wonderful insights on how the events of post-war America shaped and molded those born during the boom. Particularly good are Jones' chapters on the student movement during the late 1960s and early '70s.

Klatz, Ronald, and Robert Goldman, *Stopping the Clock: Why Many of Us Will Live Past 100 — And Enjoy Every Minute of It*, Keats Publishing, 1996.

Klatz and Goldman, founders of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, describe the various anti-aging therapies, ranging from proper diet and exercise to hormone treatments.

Russell, Cheryl, *The Master Trend: How the Baby Boom is Remaking America*, Plenum Press, 1993.

Russell, a consultant who specializes in the baby boom generation, explores the impact, both good and bad, that boomers have had on American society. For example, she finds that while baby boomers have helped to erode ethical and civil standards, they have spearheaded the drive toward increasing tolerance in America.

Articles

"Age Cannot Wither Them," *The Economist*, April 18, 1998.

This piece argues that boomers' desire to stay young is a natural outgrowth of their life experience. Since they avoided the difficult years of the Great Depression and World War II, most of them have never come face to face with real adversity or privation. "They have always wanted to 'have it all,' and they see no reason why they should not go on doing so," the article concludes.

Cowley, Geoffrey, "How to Live to 100," *Newsweek*, June 30, 1997.

Cowley explores the host of factors that scientists say will allow many people to live for 100 years, from better nutrition to anti-aging therapies like caloric restriction.

Cowley, Geoffrey, "Is Sex a Necessity?" *Newsweek*, May 11, 1998.

Cowley describes the debate surrounding the new anti-impotency drug Viagra and who should pay for it.

Fernandes, Lorna, "Surgeons Help Boomers Look as Young as They Feel," *San Francisco Business Times*, Feb. 6, 1998.

Fernandes looks at baby boomers' increasing use of cosmetic surgery and explores how technology and changing attitudes have made many of these procedures much more acceptable and common.

Librach, Phyllis Brasch, "Forever Young: Baby Boomers are Riding Out the Onslaught of Age with Laser Treatments, Vitamins, Exercise and Now — Viagra," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, May 28, 1998.

Librach describes how businesses — from drug makers to car companies — have geared up to meet baby boomers' desire to look and feel young.

O'Conner, Clint, "Putting Death on Ice: Cryonicists Preserving Bodies for a Possible Thaw, Second Chance at Life," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 15, 1997.

O'Conner describes the small but dedicated group of devotees of cryonics, the science of freezing and reanimating human beings. While cryonics is the butt of jokes in the mainstream scientific community, many proponents predict that cryonics will gain in popularity as baby boomers begin to face their mortality in the coming decades.

Sege, Irene, "The Aging of Aquarius," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 1998.

Sege gives a good overview of boomer attitudes about growing older. She predicts that this energetic cohort will live middle age to the fullest, with second careers, second families and a renewed interest in religion and spirituality.

Yardley, Jonathan, "From the Pharmacy, Faux Fountains of Youth," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1998.

Yardley, a book critic and social commentator, argues that using drugs and other technologies to try to stay young is foolhardy and misguided. He writes that "the losses that age entails seem to me of vastly less import than the riches and pleasures it provides."

Reports

***In Search of the Secrets of Aging*, National Institute on Aging, 1996.**

The institute, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, gives a good overview of what researchers have discovered about why and how we age, from the role of hormones to genetic factors.

The Next Step

Additional information from UMI's Newspaper & Periodical Abstracts™ database

Careers

Dodge, Robert, "Longer Careers for Boomers?" *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 28, 1997, p. 50.

Many experts say boomers must continue working to help pay for the high costs of their government retirement and health-care benefits. Demands by the baby boomers after the turn of the century are expected to eventually bankrupt Social Security and Medicare. But Alan Reynolds, director of economic research at the Hudson Institute, points out that there are plenty of public policies that discourage seniors from working longer or even taking part-time jobs. Reynolds said current laws impose heavy taxes and penalties on seniors who try to work while collecting Social Security.

Knox, Richard A., "Boomers See Work Coloring Golden Years," *The Boston Globe*, June 3, 1998, p. A3.

Baby boomers plan to retire the very notion of retirement, judging from a national survey released yesterday. Eight out of 10 Americans in the pace-setting generation born between 1946 and 1964 say they expect to keep working at least part-time after the conventional retirement age of 65. By contrast, only one in eight elders currently stays in the work force.

Nelson, Sandy, "Scrambling for Security: How Four Americans Spend and Save — 'We'll Probably Work Until We Die'," *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 12, 1997, p. R4.

Anita and Thom LoPiccolo would seem to be living the American Dream. They run a prosperous media-production business out of their historic home. Their children attended private schools and are about to embark on their own careers. Now, as these leading-edge baby boomers head into their 50s, their biggest concern is hanging on to the good life once they eventually retire. Asked when she and her husband began saving for retirement, Mrs. LoPiccolo, 49, laughs: "Which time? It's like asking, 'How many times did you try to quit smoking?'" Actually they started when they were in their late 30s, but they don't expect to be able to save their goal — 20 percent of their annual income — until their daughter graduates from college in 2000.

Seebacher, Noreen, "Businesses Urged to Hire Older Workers: They Bring Patience, Maturity and Unrivaled Work Ethic to the Job, One Expert Contends," *Detroit News*, May 6, 1998, p. B4.

As the population ages, older workers are the one resource employers in Michigan and nationwide can least afford to squander, says the director of an organization that provides training and employment for older workers. "We

need to educate the business community that the myths about older workers are just that: myths," said Cathy Robinson, state director of Green Thumb, a national non-profit group. "The reality is that older workers bring so much talent and stability to the workplace that it's a big mistake not to hire them or [to] let them go." It's a lesson many employers may learn sooner than they think. The aging of America's 83 million baby boomers will have a significant impact on the nation's work force and work force development programs, according to a recent Urban Institute study sponsored by the U.S. Labor Department.

Health

"Estrogen an Aid Against Diabetes," *USA Today*, June 15, 1998, p. D1.

Older women who take estrogen are less likely to develop diabetes, and if they do have the disease, it's easier to manage and less likely to lead to heart disease.

"Study Finds Some Promise in Alternative to Estrogen," *The New York Times*, May 13, 1998, p. A21.

A new alternative to estrogen may offer older women many of the hormone's healthful effects on hearts and bones without one of its most worrisome side effects, an increased risk of breast cancer. Raloxifene has already been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to prevent osteoporosis in post-menopausal women. Now a study has found that raloxifene, like estrogen, might also protect the heart, researchers reported in Wednesday's *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study found that raloxifene lowered levels of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, the so-called "bad" cholesterol, by 12 percent in post-menopausal women, compared with 14 percent for estrogen.

Chase, Marilyn, "Health Journal: Getting a Bit Thick in the Middle? It's Not Hopeless After All," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 1997, p. B1.

Two central truths about an aging body — the ease of gaining weight and the difficulty of losing it — preoccupy baby boomers and their elders alike. Research suggests that combining aerobic exercise with strength training not only promotes fitness but also helps reverse time's drag on the metabolism.

Dolby, Victoria, "Anti-Aging Strategies to Add Years of Health to Our Lives," *Better Nutrition*, March 1997, pp. 20-22.

There is growing consensus that aging changes are produced by free-radical reactions. Anti-aging compounds found in green tea, multivitamin supplements, DHEA and garlic are discussed.

Gonyea, Judith G., "Mid-Life and Menopause: Uncharted Territories for Baby Boomer Women," *Generations*, spring 1998, pp. 87-89.

Baby boomer women are exploring their options as they make the transition to menopause. A major decision facing post-menopausal women is whether or not to take hormone-replacement therapy.

Hill, Daniel, "Take a Pill!" *Brandweek*, Dec. 1, 1997, pp. 22-25.

Sales of natural remedies and herbs have exploded in the last several years, with many companies that sell vitamins and other nutritional supplements reporting huge sales increases.

Knox, Richard, "Osteoporosis Drugs Create Hope — and Confusion," *The Boston Globe*, May 18, 1998, p. D1.

Nita Goldstein was on estrogen for a decade, ever since doctors discovered osteoporosis in her spine when she was 62. But last month the Cambridge woman switched to raloxifene, a new "designer estrogen" being touted as the safer hormone for women worried about brittle bones. Studies indicate that post-menopausal women like Goldstein who take estrogen long-term — five to 10 years — have as much as a 50 percent greater risk of developing breast cancer. If new data being presented this afternoon in Los Angeles can be believed, raloxifene (marketed as Evista) actually lowers a woman's breast cancer risk as much as 74 percent in the first two years or so of taking it, compared with women who take no hormones.

Leonard, Mary, "Out of the Shadows; Women's Mid-Life Health Concerns Were Long Ignored; Now the Pendulum has Swung to the Other Extreme," *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 10, 1997, p. D1.

If more evidence is required that this is a menopause moment, consider this sign of the times: A top female policy-maker in the Clinton administration was recently approached by publishers of those yellow-and-black, wise-cracking guidebooks to write *Women's Health Care for Dummies*. Women already outlive men by more than seven years, on average. Now the health concerns of middle-aged females are in the spotlight and consuming more federal research dollars than many diseases that claim far more lives — male and female — each year. For example, it's estimated that far more Americans will die of lung cancer (160,400) this year than breast cancer (44,200), yet lung cancer research will get a fraction of breast cancer's funding. Because women spend two of every three health-care dollars nationally, this sudden interest in their well-being is being driven as much by economics as compassion.

Pipp, Tracy L., "Lowering the Boom: An Entire Generation May Soon Find Itself in Hot Water With a Variety of Health Problems and Diseases," *Detroit*

***News*, Jan. 27, 1997, p. B1.**

Health problems loom for the baby boom generation. The causes are diverse and unique, say doctors and scientists. Boomers lead a sedentary lifestyle, especially as compared with the previous generation. They're stressed, and they don't eat right. They rely on antibiotics to make them feel better when they are sick. When the boomers will most need more health care, "there will be a shrinkage of students coming into the health professions," predicts Cynthia Zane, dean of the College of Health Professions at the University of Detroit-Mercy. "Gaining even 10 pounds puts you at a greater risk for diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, joint problems, sleep apnea and gallbladder disease," says registered dietitian Betsey Kurlito, co-author of *Nutrition Secrets for Optimum Health*. Some physicians are even expecting a near epidemic of Type II diabetes due to poor eating habits as the boomers enter their mid-50s and 60s.

Sege, Irene, "The Aging of Aquarius; Boomers Look Beyond the Old Boundaries as Doors Open for Increased Longevity, Second Careers, and Spiritual Well-Being," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 1998, p. C1.

Well, get ready for the glory days of the menopausal and the bald. The baby boomers are at it again, moving into a new phase of life and, as always, taking the rest of the culture with them. Around 2006, the median age of the nation's 78 million boomers will be 50, old enough to join the American Association of Retired Persons. By the year 2000, a full third of American grandparents will be boomers. In the next millennium, the biggest generation in American history — those born between 1946 and 1964 — will be blessed with longevity and a determination to maintain their vigor. They'll manage the ongoing repercussions of their complex history of marriage and relationships. They'll shun the label "mature" and ponder the meaning of life. They'll remake themselves and then maybe do it again. As author Gail Sheehy says, "They'll make being 50-something the glamorous and newly sexy age to be." What with children leaving home and parents dying and grandchildren arriving, the path through the 50s is strewn with as many major life changes as any decade since the 20s. Some will suffer early illness, even death, and all will know someone who does. The boomers' journeys will continue to shape the public psyche, not only because of their numbers but also because a talk-about-it generation — particularly its women — that rewrote the rules of sex and rewrote the rules of work and family, and now is rewriting the rules of menopause, won't go quietly through their 50s.

Thompson, Stephanie, "Boomers Come Runnin'..." *Brandweek*, Feb. 2, 1998, p. 1.

Kellogg is launching Smart Start, a sweetened multi-grain cereal targeted specifically at the boomer generation. The company is said to have an aggressive marketing plan ready.

Cosmetic Surgery

Gallo, Nick, "The New Face of Cosmetic Surgery," *Better Homes & Gardens*, February 1998, pp. 52-60.

The baby boom generation is a big part of the current surge in cosmetic surgery. Some of the most common surgical procedures are discussed.

Lore, Diane, "Injections of a Deadly Poison are Giving Wrinkle-Wearry Baby Boomers a Shot at Beauty," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 3, 1998, p. C1.

Call it botulism for beauty. Originally harnessed to relax muscles associated with serious medical conditions such as swallowing disorders and crossed eyes, Botox — a diluted, purified form of the toxin — is one of the hottest, new weapons against wrinkles. In New York, health clubs are offering injections of Botox for clients who want other ways to enhance their appearance besides exercise. And it's become a verb in some places, as in, "I'm getting Botoxed today." Botox has, however, retained one trait of its evil twin. Like botulism, it still has the ability to slightly paralyze muscle — which allows it to eliminate wrinkles by essentially smoothing them out. The facial muscles are not frozen, but temporarily softened. Botox works best on crow's feet around the eyes, the frown lines between the brows and "surprise" lines in the forehead.

Seligson, Susan V., "The Changing Face of Cosmetic Surgery," *Health*, March 1997, pp. 84-86.

Better techniques and more choices in cosmetic surgery have many more women deciding to go under the knife. Seligson discusses some women's experiences with cosmetic surgery and the different types of cosmetic surgery.

Solomon, Judith H., "Men Turn Back the Clock — Nips, Tucks and Facial Peels Cross Over the Gender Line," *Detroit News*, April 16, 1998, p. E1.

Cosmetic surgery is just one of the beauty presents men are giving themselves today. "Look good/feel good" procedures and treatments — running the gamut from surgical nips, tucks and hair transplants to non-surgical hair dyeing, facial smoothing and body massages — are increasing all over Detroit. Theodore Golden, a plastic surgeon, says today's active seniors feel young, they want to live like they're young and they want to look young, too.

Impotence

'Boom in Boomer Impotence,' *USA Today*, May 6, 1998, p. A1.

Before the drug Viagra, aging baby boomer men led a boom in seeking treatment for sexual dysfunction. In 1997, 1.8 million made 2.8 million doctor visits, 17 percent more than in 1996, and 628,000 were new customers.

Hoppe, Arthur, "The Bottle Of Youth," *San Francisco*

***Chronicle*, May 6, 1998, p. A23.**

No more intrepid adventurer exists than Buck Ace. Buck has swum the Alimentary Canal, trekked the Alacarte Desert and climbed the towering Peaks of Ecstasy. But today Buck faces the greatest challenge of them all — the conquest of the dread aging process. Buck was sure he had achieved his goal the other evening in the Asparagus Fern Bar and Chat Room. Daphne B., a curvaceous young woman half his age, succumbed in nothing flat to his sophisticated blandishments. He had hardly murmured, "You come here often?" and, "What's your sign?" when he felt it was time to add, "Excuse me while I swallow this little blue pill."

Librach, Phyllis Brasch, "Forever Young; Baby Boomers Are Riding Out the Onslaught of Age with Laser Treatments, Vitamins, Exercise and Now — Viagra," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 28, 1998, p. G1.

After months of hearing middle-aged men crave Viagra, William Catalona, chief urologist at Washington University, wanted to be ready to write prescriptions the day the long-awaited pill for impotence won federal approval. "It's like the Fountain of Youth," said Catalona. "Viagra is analogous to anti-wrinkle cream. This is something that will turn back the clock and make men the way they were when they were young." Even as Viagra is making its big splash, baby boomers are crowding around the Fountain of Youth for any spritz that gives hopes of erasing, or at least fading, tell-tale signs of aging — from crow's feet to varicose veins.

Lore, Diane, "Science Watch; Overcoming Impotence; In Addition to Viagra, a Variety of New Treatments are Expected Soon — But With Them Come Tough Issues for Insurers," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, May 17, 1998, p. C6.

Although men are rushing by the thousands to get their hands on Viagra, it is only the first of a host of new medications designed to ease sexual dysfunction. From penile creams to spring-loaded injections, drug manufacturers are attempting to tap into a market of more than 30 million men who suffer from erectile problems and perhaps millions more drawn by ego and a promise of renewed youth. "It's a very satisfying time to be a urologist," said Atlanta urologist Lawrence Goldstone. "We finally have something to offer that is not invasive, that works. It's truly exciting." But the push is also testing the boundaries of insurance coverage. In less than a month, many managed-care companies are questioning whether drugs that enhance a patient's quality of life — such as Viagra — should be covered with the same consistency as pills that treat life-threatening conditions, such as heart disease or cancer. "I think there's a lot of concern about the cost of drugs in general — they are having a significant impact on the price of health insurance," said Chris Martin, spokesman for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association in Chicago. "Viagra and other drugs like it just point to that growing problem."

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