TEST YOURSELF · END OF CHAPTER 1

Test: what is your physical age?

These five simple tests can be done at home in a quarter of an hour. Compare your result with the values for your age and sex: above the range or the average, you are doing better than most people your age; below it, less well. For test 2, the reverse applies: the shorter the time, the better. These values are population averages, and a single result is not a diagnosis.

Test 1 · Walking speed

Mark out a distance of 4 metres on the floor, with one or two metres to speed up before and slow down after. Walk at your usual pace and time the 4 metres: your speed equals 4 divided by the time in seconds. Each gain of 0.1 m/s is associated with a reduction in mortality of about 12%.

Age	Men (average)	Women (average)
60–69	1.34 m/s	1.24 m/s
70–79	1.26 m/s	1.13 m/s
80+	0.97 m/s	0.94 m/s

Test 2 · Timed Up and Go

Sit well back in a chair with armrests, your back against the backrest. On the signal, stand up, walk at your usual pace to a marker placed 3 metres away, turn around, walk back and sit down again. The stopwatch stops when your back touches the backrest.

Age	Average (men and women)	Typical range
60–69	8.1 s	7.1 to 9.0 s
70–79	9.2 s	8.2 to 10.2 s
80–99	11.3 s	10.0 to 12.7 s

SOURCES

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TEST YOURSELF · CONTINUED

Test: what is your physical age? (continued)

Test 3 · Arm curls

Sitting with your back straight, hold a dumbbell in the hand on your stronger side: 2.3 kg for women, 3.6 kg for men (a full water bottle can do the job). With your elbow tucked against your body, bend your arm fully, turning your palm upwards, then lower it until your arm is straight. Count the number of complete curls in 30 seconds.

Age	Men (normal range)	Women (normal range)
60–64	16 to 22	13 to 19
65–69	15 to 21	12 to 18
70–74	14 to 21	12 to 17
75–79	13 to 19	11 to 17
80–84	13 to 19	10 to 16
85–89	11 to 17	10 to 15
90–94	10 to 14	8 to 13

Test 4 · Grip strength

Standing, with your arms by your sides, squeeze a hand dynamometer as hard as you can for 3 seconds (about €40 from a pharmacy or online). Each 5 kg drop in strength is associated with a risk of death about 16% higher.

Age	Men (normal range)	Women (normal range)
60–64	39 to 48 kg	23 to 28.5 kg
65–69	36 to 45 kg	22 to 27 kg
70–74	33 to 42 kg	20.5 to 25.5 kg
75–79	29 to 38 kg	18.5 to 23.5 kg

Test 5 · Standing on one leg

Barefoot, near a wall, with your arms crossed over your chest and your eyes fixed on a point, lift one foot to just beside the ankle of the other leg without touching it. The stopwatch stops when you uncross your arms, put your foot down or move your supporting foot; maximum 45 seconds. Between the ages of 60 and 75, being unable to hold for 10 seconds is associated with an almost doubled risk of death over seven years.

Age	Men (average)	Women (average)
60–69	34 s	30 s
70–79	26 s	17 s
80+	9 s	11 s

Repeat these tests every 6 to 12 months: your own progress is the best indicator of all. If your walking speed, test 2 or balance is clearly below the values for your age, talk to your doctor or a physiotherapist (physical therapist).