



Health promotion

Health tips for being a Pilot and Air Traffic Controller

Pilot and Air Traffic Controller are professional groups that are repeatedly evaluated throughout their professional career to ensure they are fit to work. Those applying for training undergo extensive testing, including psychological testing, to ensure they have the required cognitive skills, flying aptitude and other competencies to do the job. For example, commercial airline pilots must possess a valid Class 1 Medical certificate to be eligible to fly and attend medical evaluations every year until the age of 40 and then every 6 months until the age of 65, to ensure they remain fit to fly and retain their certification. It was noted that certain medical and psychological conditions will invalidate certification (e.g. heart disease, neurological illness, metabolic diseases and mood disorder).

Throughout their career, they are responsible for maintaining valid licences and medical certificates. Failure in the medical examination can result in temporary suspension or loss of licence.

Nowadays, human are living longer because of better public health, advancement in medicine and better living conditions. The average lifespan for women in Hong Kong is 87.32 years, and local men on average can expect to live to 81.24. Japanese women took second place at 87.05, while Icelandic and Swiss men shared the second position in the men’s category at 81 years. With optimum lifestyles, we can now reasonably expect an active life until 85 or late eighties. People over 85 now make up the fastest-growing segment of our population.

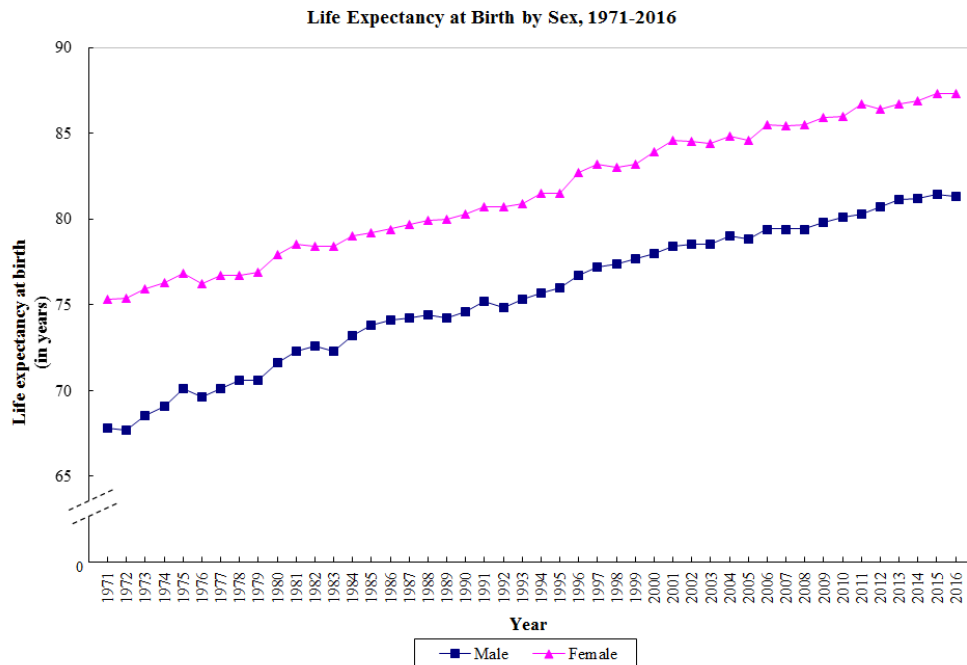


Fig.1 Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex, 1971-2016

Mid-year Population Estimates by Age Group, 1979-2016

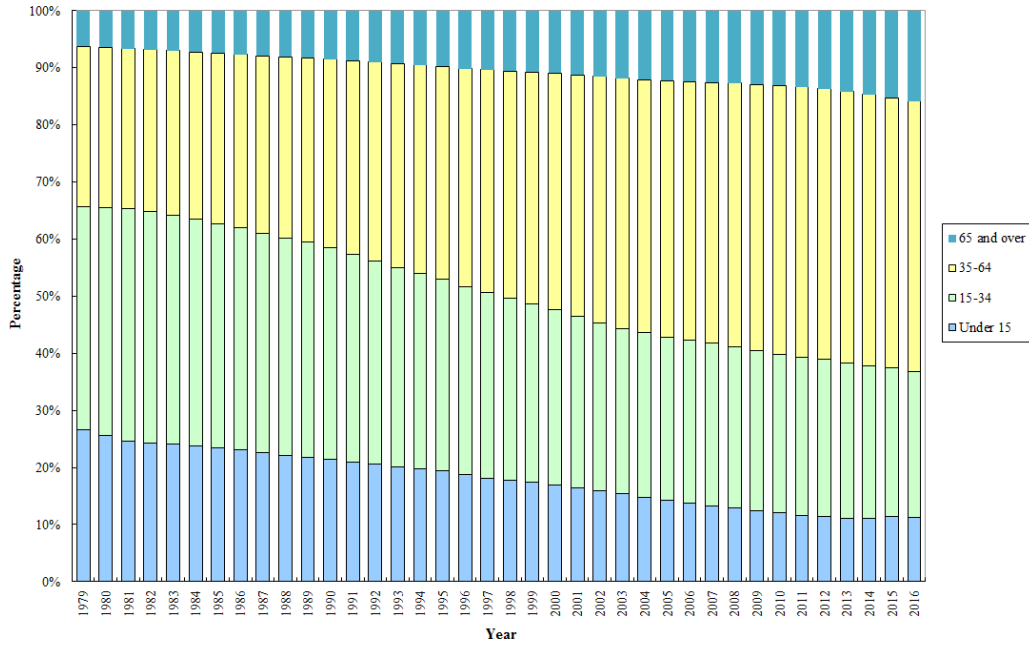


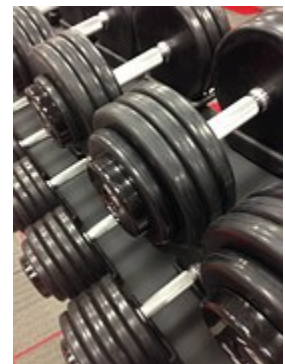
Fig.2 Mid-year Population Estimates by Age Group, 1979-2016

Source: Healthy HK, Department of Health

The key issue is whether these will be extra happy years to enjoy. Will we be mentally and physically vigorous, or frail and fragile? All of this depends on how we prepare our present lifestyle for the later years.

Here are some tips to keep fit:

- Have 20 or 30 minutes of fairly vigorous aerobic exercise (running, walking, swimming) three or four times a week. 30-40 minutes most days of the week is the best. Include weight or resistance training for 15 minutes two or three times a week. Exercise promotes strength, flexibility, and endurance.





- Enjoy a balanced, varied diet to include fresh vegetables and fruits (lots), whole grain breads and cereals, beans and peas, skinless chicken and turkey, fish, skim milk products. Be aware of the adverse effects of excessive sugar, salt, and fats intake in fast food.
- Obesity is a modifiable risk factor in cardiovascular disease. Watch your weight and never get more than 10 percent above your optimum weight.
- Try to build close, warm friendships for social companionship. These can help you in your trough.
- Treasure your family and spiritual commitments, so that they can weather stresses easily.
- Stimulate your mind by having good hobbies, e.g., reading, adult-education or learning computers.
- Be moderate on alcohol or better refrain from it.
- Stop or do not try smoking.
- Get appropriate exams and screening tests from your family physician who knows your medical history.
- Don't retire both your body and mind completely. A few part-time hours or volunteer work may add further pleasure and meaning to your life.

More health tips for pilots:

- Stay hydrated by applying moisturizer and drinking fluids during flights. Due to low humidity of aircraft cockpit air at high altitude, flight crew might experience dehydrating symptoms like dry eyes, taut skin, dry mouth etc. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks for they are diuretics that interfere with body's regulating hormones and dehydrate you more.
- Stretch legs on a plane to improve blood circulation. World Health Organization Research into Global Hazards of Travel Project confirms that immobility is an important factor leading to Deep Vein Thrombosis and that being seated for more than four hours in an aircraft may increase the risk of blood clotting.
- Adapt as best to new time zone by scheduling your sleep and meal as far as possible. Human body is naturally sleepest at 3am and 3pm and designed for eating meal during the day time.
- In case of intended flying after scuba diving, allow the body sufficient time to rid itself of excess nitrogen absorbed during diving. If not, altitude decompression sickness DCS can occur during exposure to altitudes as low as 5,000 ft. or less and create a serious in-flight emergency.

Add life to your years, not just years to your life. Be fit instead of feeble and fragile.