

By: Stefano/2008, Science Editor

Couch Potatoes Live 10 Years Less!

Telomeres show so

The remote control saves you from wasting too much energy changing the channels. The only problem is that now and then you have to go to the bathroom.... Damn it! But don't worry: you will be saved of too much effort, as you will live 10 years less because of this couch potato lifestyle. This is the result of a British research led by Tim Spector, at St. Thomas' hospital in London, on the lengths of telomeres, the tips of our chromosomes, in the white blood cells of 2,401 twins. Telomeres forming a "chromosomal clock" means that they get shorter with each cell division, and when their length is too short, the cell loses its capacity of division. This is aging. It appeared that subjects who did not make physical exercise in their spare time possessed shorter telomeres, in comparison with the highly active ones. The average values revealed that the telomeres of those exercising only 16 minutes weekly was shorter with 200 nucleotide base pairs (from DNA's formula) than the subjects exercising about 3 hours weekly. The value would correspond to 10 years of biological age. The same team has found that smoking and obesity have the same effect on telomere length. The connection between physical activity and telomere length stood even when smoking, overweight or incapacitating chronic diseases (that turned the subjects sedentary) were considered. Another factor found by the team to affect the telomere length was found to be the psychological stress, inducing oxidative stress, responsible for the emergence of free radicals that damage DNA, provoking mutations and cutting off telomere bits, shortening it. Physical exercise seems to decrease that stress, but only if done during spare time. "Slogging away in manual jobs, on the other hand, tends to have the opposite effect and can shorten telomeres because of the psychological stress of being in the lower social pecking order. Telomere length is inherited, but even after analyzing a subgroup of twin pairs, who share both genetics and upbringing, the twin who was doing more exercise had longer telomeres - on average, an 88 base pair difference ", said Spector. In the end, there are no miracle drugs for keeping you young. So, put your a** to work!