

August 2016

Dear Clients and Friends:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), women in the United States are living almost five years longer than men.

There's one obvious reason why men don't last as long.



But there must be more to it. If we look back in time, the most reliable historical records come from Sweden. In 1800, life expectancy at birth was 33 years for women and 31 years for men, while today it's 83.5 years and 79.5 years. As one observer put it: "This remarkably consistent survival advantage of women compared with men in early life, in late life, and in total life is seen in every country in every year for which reliable birth and death records exist. There may be no more robust pattern in human biology."

Scientists have come up with four "best guesses" why women live longer. The first is women have two X chromosomes, giving them double copies of every gene. If one gene is faulty, they can use the spare. Men have only one of those X chromosomes, paired with a Y chromosome. The "Y" is limping along at this point, having lost 97% of its original genes over time. As men grow older and their cells begin to malfunction, they don't have all the backup genes women do, exposing them to a greater risk of disease.

Then there's the "jogging female heart" hypothesis. During the second half of the menstrual cycle, a woman's heart rate increases, offering the same benefits as moderate exercise. The result is a delayed risk of cardiovascular disease later in life.

Men are generally bigger than women, which has its disadvantages. The larger you are, the more cells you have in your body, leading to a greater chance of harmful mutations. Bigger bodies also require more energy. That comes from burning glucose, adding to wear and tear within the tissues and creating long-term damage.

The number one culprit is likely testosterone. Women produce a small amount of this hormone, but it's primarily a guy thing. This is what gives men deeper voices and receding hairlines. Testosterone makes a body stronger in the short term, but the same effects leave us open to heart disease, infections, and cancer later in life.

It's not surprising that eunuchs, who produce almost no testosterone, live longer than other men. They were valued for centuries by royal families in Europe and Asia, based on the belief they make more loyal and trustworthy servants. A recent study of an Imperial Court in Korea showed that during the 1800s, eunuchs lived for around 70 years, compared with an average of 50 years for other men in the court. Overall, they were 130 times more likely to celebrate their hundredth birthday than the average man living in Korea at the time.

There may be a lesson there, but I'm going to ignore it.

Regards,



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