



For Seniors, Going to Church Could Actually Extend Life Expectancy

For many churchgoers, the act of going to church is a spiritual one, a ritual that helps to affirm their faith and keep them in greater concert with a higher power. For the religious, the [spiritual benefits of attending church](#) on a regular basis are paramount.

There is also an added bonus to regular church attendance, if you will. It turns out that going to church can actually improve your health - both mentally and physically. This is especially true of seniors, many of whom suffer from [depression](#) and other mental health disorders, including addiction. While religion, prayer, and church attendance isn't a magical cure for aging, research suggests that it can actually help you live a longer life.

A recent study looked at a very large sample size — over 75,000 female nurses. The study wanted to see if church attendance had a positive effect on life expectancy.

The results were pretty shocking.

From [CNN](#):

“The researchers found that women who went to church more than once a week had a 33% lower risk of dying during the study period compared with those who said they never went. Less-frequent attendance was also associated with a lower risk of death, as women who attended

once a week or less than weekly had 26% and 13% lower risk of death, respectively. Women who regularly attended religious services also had higher rates of social support and optimism, had lower rates of depression and were less likely to smoke. However, the researchers took into account these differences between churchgoers and non-churchgoers when they calculated the decrease in death rates of 13% to 33%.”

Go a little or go a lot, this study shows that even moderate church attendance has a significant effect on longevity. [Similar studies](#) have also found a [correlation](#) between church attendance and life expectancy.

Reason.org charts the results of another study, of 21,000 participants:

“Here’s what the researchers found: compared to those who never attend religious services, people who attend church, temple, or synagogue more than once a week, have the equivalent of a 7.5-year-longer life expectancy! Those who do not attend religious services have a 1.87 times higher risk of death for most causes within eight years. So does this mean that if someone is a dedicated church attendee, they have a good chance of living a healthier lifestyle than someone who never attends church? Yes, indeed, that is true. However, even after controlling for various factors, such as demographics, health status, socioeconomic status, and social ties, the researchers still found a strong (1.5x) and significant ($p < 0.01$) positive impact attending religious services had on the life expectancy of attendees.”

This is great news for seniors, as most communities provide plenty of [opportunities](#) to attend church services and join religious communities.

So, why is there a correlation? How can going to church actually make you live longer?

The simple act of church attendance provides numerous positive health effects - both mentally and physically. Church helps seniors who struggle with loneliness and depression by providing a welcoming community. Religious worship and prayer has been shown to have positive physiological effects like reducing blood pressure, calming breathing and heart rate, and a reduction in stress and anxiety. The act of simply [getting up and moving around](#) cannot be overlooked. What’s more, seniors can get together with friends and fellow church goers to work out together via programs such as SilverSneakers, [which is offered](#) at no extra cost through various Medicare Advantage policies.

Church provides seniors with a sense of purpose and belonging, and this is vital when it comes to longevity. In fact, this correlation is so great that even the less-religious can benefit from attending church.

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