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April 20th, 2011



The Healthiest Man in America 0

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Over the past month, *Men's Health* has been on the search for the healthiest man in America. But instead of collecting 5K times and blood pressure readings—given that approach would be a major HIPAA violation and a huge pain in the ass—we looked at it another way: Could we use statistical and demographic information to hunt down the healthiest man in the U. S. of A.? Would this demographically ideal individual *actually* be a healthy guy?

Full disclosure: Our idea came from the *New York Times*, who asked Gallup to find the happiest man in America. Their results: [Honolulu resident Alvin Wong, age 69](#). When they check in with him, he was indeed quite happy.

After rummaging through stacks of studies, we finally came up with the characteristics that described our ideal candidate: a white male between the ages of 20 and 39, who is Jewish, doesn't smoke, is married, about 5'7, and is right-handed.

So where was this guy hiding? Madison, Wisconsin. According to data from the CDC, FBI, and EPA, the capital of the Badger State dominates in key categories of health, fitness, and quality of life—which is why it was selected as our [Best City for Men 2011](#).

This is where we began our search. We contacted the Jewish Federation of Madison to help us track down our guy. Meet Eric Foxman, a 5-foot-7, 38-year-old, right-handed Jew, who's married with children and lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Foxman is a personal trainer, whose wife grows organic vegetables in their backyard.



Here's a closer look at our criteria and how Foxman stacked up:

Religion

Although Foxman doesn't consider himself to be particularly religious nowadays, he was raised in a Jewish home and observed the holidays. Those who were raised Jewish have best reported health, with 40 percent saying their health is "excellent," says a 2010 study in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

Jews outlive Protestants, Catholics, and atheists, with a life expectancy of about 83 years, says a study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (Related from *Men's Health*: [Are You Too Religious?](#))

Skin color

Caucasians are less likely to suffer from obesity and obesity related disease, according to research from the Center for Disease Control. Furthermore, white males live almost 5.5 years longer than black males, according to a 2010 National Vital Statistics Report. (One limitation of that report: No data was available on other races.) Obviously other factors besides race itself—socioeconomic status, access to health care, etc.—are at play here.

Marital status

Foxman and his wife have been together for nearly 16 years. "She is definitely my best friend the first person I talk to about anything. I'm in love," he says.

A number of studies have shown that married people live longer than their single counterparts. But there's a catch: A 2008 study published in the *Journal of Family Communication* found anger suppression and poor communication within a marriage can result in medical

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consequences. "Communicating a problem is more important than necessarily solving it," explains says Ben Beitin Ph.D., associate professor of marriage and family therapy at Seton Hall University. "If couples bury feelings and never fight, it almost always leads to feelings of resentment. It is not fighting that leads to a failing marriage as much as poor communication." Related from MensHealth.com: [6 Ways to Be a Better Husband](#).

Foxman and his wife are doing well here, too. They occasionally disagree and "still work on things," Foxman says, like fine-tuning their communication and coordinating chores around the house.

Smoking

A 2007 study published in *Tobacco Control* found that cigarette smoking can reduce life expectancy up to almost 9 years, depending on how often the smoker puffs. Foxman says he's never smoked—"It's just not my shtick."

Right-handed

Foxman is a righty—which is good news for him! Having a dominate right hand may add up to 2 years to his life. The *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* found evidence that left-handedness is associated with decreased longevity among athletic adult men. Though researchers aren't sure why, a study in the *Clinical EEG & Neuroscience Journal* found that left-handedness was associated with higher incidence of cardiac abnormalities.

Height

Men standing at 6 feet or taller had twice as many blood clots than men standing below 5 foot 8, found a study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Shorter, smaller bodies have lower death rates and fewer diet-related chronic diseases, especially past middle age, according to a report in *Life Science* journal. Foxman stands at 5-foot-7.

Waist size

The larger the waist, the larger the health care bill, says a study published in *Obesity Research*. Those with a waist circumference greater than 40.7 inch waist generated 85 percent more inpatient charges than the group with a waist circumference less than 32.7 inches. Foxman's belt size: 31 inches.

"Fat that accumulates around the abdominal organs is biologically different than fat in other areas of the body," says Prediman Krishan (P.K.) Shah, M.D, director of cardiology at Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute in San Diego and a member of the *Men's Health* advisory board. " It contains more inflammatory cells and secretes chemicals that increase the risk of a number of diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and sleep apnea, just to name a few."

So, do you want to be in the running for Healthiest Man in America 2012? Start with the [100 Best Fitness Tips of All Time](#) and make these [8 Greatest Guy Meals](#) dinnertime staples.

—Dana Leigh Smith



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