

Should We Live Forever?

Future technologies could extend our lives for decades.
What could go wrong? Everything. **By Justin O'Neill**

Dying has always been kind of a bummer. Perhaps that's why the idea of living forever has fascinated humans since . . . well, forever. Immortality turns up in philosophy, folklore, and literature from the world's most ancient cultures to today—from Greek mythology to Harry Potter.

But now, the idea of living for a very long time has moved from the pages of science fiction to laboratories around the world. Even Google is investing in anti-aging technologies. And while nothing

that **radically** prolongs life exists *yet*, experts say major **innovations** are just around the corner.

A New World

Our average life span is already much longer than it used to be, thanks to centuries of advances in medicine, safety, and nutrition. Fifty percent of children in the Roman Empire, for instance, died before age 5. In 1900, Americans lived for about 47 years. Today, the average American lives to age 78.

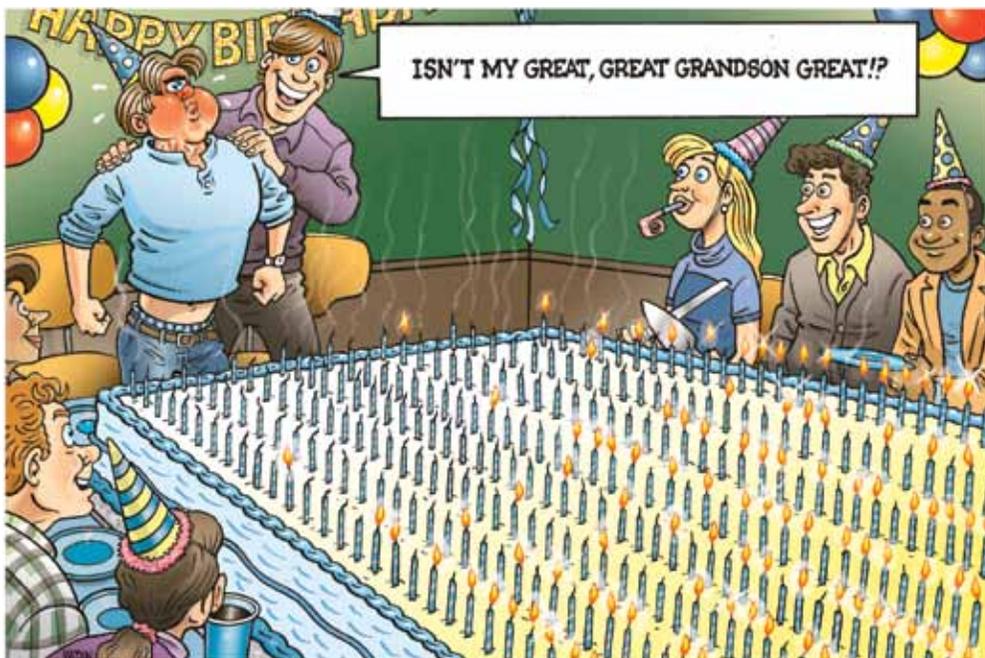
The ability to extend our lives so dramatically may prove what

some scientists believe: Aging isn't **inevitable**; it's a disease—and we can cure it.

There's a lot scientists still don't understand about how and why people age, but they have ideas about how to prolong life—from new drugs and replacement organs to cryonics (a process in which a body is frozen and preserved for the future, when death will have been "cured"). If these ideas sound expensive, that's because they probably will be. A big concern about life extension is that only the wealthy will be able to afford it.

That isn't the only issue though. If everyone lived forever, where would everyone live? If babies continue to be born but no one dies, population growth—already straining Earth's resources—will accelerate. Providing food, water, shelter, and education will be a huge challenge.

Then again, imagine what immortal humans could accomplish. Every person could learn and study and create without that annoying thing



KEVIN DISCOVERED AN UNEXPECTED DOWNSIDE TO IMMORTALITY WHEN IT TOOK HIM TWENTY-SEVEN TRIES TO BLOW OUT ALL THE CANDLES AT HIS 732ND BIRTHDAY.



What Do You Think?

Should we seek immortality? Use evidence from the article to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.

YES

Let's live on and on and on . . .

1 Immortal humans could accomplish more.

2 _____

3 _____

NO

All good things must end.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

called death getting in the way. (Want to be an astronaut? Then a chef? Then a painter? No problem!) And what if brilliant inventors could live for centuries? Just imagine the **contraptions** light bulb creator Thomas Edison might have thought up by now if he hadn't died in 1931.

Forever Is a Long Time

Everyone wants a long, happy life, but forever is a long time. Immortality might get, well, *boring*. We'd live long enough to travel the world, taste every food, read every book—basically, have every possible experience . . . and then just keep on living. Does anyone even *want* to live forever? A 2013 survey found that 56 percent of Americans wouldn't want medical treatments that extend life to 120 years or longer. For many, the fact that life must end is what makes life a gift—something to be cherished.

On the other hand, in a world where no one ages, wrinkles, fragile bones, gray hair, and age-related conditions like **arthritis** and **Alzheimer's** would disappear. You would get to know your great-great-great grandchildren, and be healthy enough to play soccer with them!

The oldest person ever—a French woman named Jeanne Calment—lived to be 122. By the end of her life, she was nearly completely blind and deaf. Still, she remained upbeat.

Her secret? "Always keep your smile," she said.

Well, there you go. Perhaps it's as easy as that. ●

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide if immortality is a good idea. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay.



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