

# Proof you ARE as old as you feel

THE old adage "You're only as old as you feel" may not be far from the truth. For experts can now calculate a person's "real" biological age as distinct from their calendar years.

It is all based on tests to check on our rate of physical deterioration.

A British clinic is carrying out the examinations to give information about a patient's health, fitness, lifestyle and family medical history.

The results will tell whether we are physically older or younger than our true age in years.

With the tests becoming increasingly accurate, one leading British ageing expert has called for biological age to be used to decide when workers retire.

Professor Robert Weale claims that if an employee's "real" age is 55, for example, when he reaches his 65th birthday, he should be encouraged to work for another decade. There is even the suggestion that dating agencies could use

## Trend

the information in a bid to better match suitable partners.

The concept of determining "real" age is already big business in America where a string of books and websites are dedicated to helping people work out if their body is older or younger than their years.

British actress Honor Blackman, the ex-Bond girl who is now 77, has made an art of ageing gracefully.

Others notable for looking much younger than their years include Monarch of the Glen star Susan Hampshire, 67, and The Good Life's Felicity Kendal, 58.

Perhaps most famous of all for defying the years is screen Sophia Loren, still stunning at 70.

The battle to delay the ageing process has seen a growing trend in botox injections to smooth wrinkles

By **Jo Willey**

and drastic plastic surgery in a bid to defy nature. Just how successful people are at pushing back time can now be judged by the latest tests.

Blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, waist-to-hip ratio, extent of hair loss or greying and the strength of handgrip are all measured to calculate "real" age.

Lung capacity, vision, balance, sense of smell and mental alertness are also indicators. Once these are measured, a computer "map" highlights in red the organs that are ageing quickly.

The parts of the body that are faring better show up in green. People prepared to splash out between £265 and £895 for the tests will walk away with evidence proving that they are as young as they feel - or perhaps not.

Doctors who conduct the examinations will advise patients on how they can make themselves younger.

Prof Weale, of the Institute of Gerontology at King's College London, believes that insurance companies may soon begin using their results.

He says: "Most employers take account of a person's calendar years rather than biological age. It is the latter which is crucial in the performance of any task."

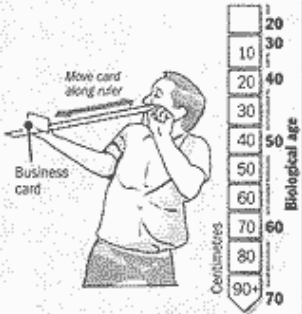
Dr Lynette Yong, of HB Health, a west London clinic which offers the tests, says: "The purpose is to motivate people to improve their health. It is useful only if you are going to do something about it."



**HOW TO TEST YOUR REAL AGE**



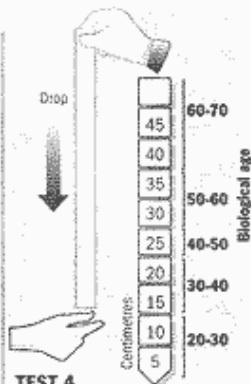
**TEST 1**  
Stand on one leg with the other bent at a 45 degree angle. Place your hands on your hips and close your eyes. Time how long it takes for you to lose your balance. Repeat the test three times and take the best score.



**TEST 2**  
Place a ruler below your eye on your cheekbone. Hold a business card upright and facing towards you as far along the ruler away from your face as possible. Slowly move the card towards your face. When the type blurs, measure the distance at the point it can be easily read.



**TEST 3**  
Look in the mirror and study your eyeball. Is there a white arc around the edge of your cornea, the transparent outer shell of the eye? The longer the arc, the higher your cholesterol is likely to be. As a sign of ageing, an unbroken line is normal in someone aged 80.



**TEST 4**  
Get someone to suspend a 45cm ruler above your dominant hand, held as though you are clutching a glass. As they drop it try to catch it as quickly as possible. Repeat three times and take average score.