

# Pick up the pace if you want to add a few years to your life

## DICK LUMSDEN

examines the theory that a simple test can predict your chances of surviving the next five years

And now for a bit of good news... Barring any unforeseen natural disasters, accidents or being caught up in random acts of terrorism, I should still be alive and kicking five years from now.

Well, to be more accurate, the signs are that I have a 98% chance of making it through to 2020 – based on a three minute online test which, scientists claim, is the most accurate indicator of short term mortality rates ever produced.

The bad news, I suppose, is that I better make a start on the long postponed re-decoration of Lumsden Towers if its health is to stay as sharp as mine.

Published in this month's edition of *The Lancet*, no less, the study by Ubble (no I've never heard of them either) is reportedly based on over 500,000 responses and measured over time.

I urge you to go to the website at [www.ubble.co.uk](http://www.ubble.co.uk) and try it for yourself. It may help you decide between buying a Caribbean cruise or a funeral plan.

The thing is though, that while I do feel reasonably healthy for someone approaching 60, I know I am carrying a bit too much weight, my diet isn't great and don't ask about the drinking.

However, none of these were mentioned in the test. Ubble claims that what you own up to about your walking habits is a far better indicator of premature death.

They may be right. Walking has been touted for a long time as one of the body's great early warning signs.

In 2009 the British Medical Journal published a study linking slow walking speed with increased risk of heart disease. In 2011 *The Journal of the American Medical Association* claimed that walking faster over the age of 65 could extend your life expectancy. And in 2014 The Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, liked slow walking speed to the onset of dementia.

In my Ubble test, I honestly answered that my normal walking speed is a "steady pace"



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■ Above, The launch of the Suffolk Walking Festival at Brandon Country Park, last month. Are you a brisk or a steady walker; an ambler or a dawdler asks Dick Lumsden.

Photo: PHIL MORLEY



■ A woman walking cross country and on a forest trail.

Photo: RAFAL OLKIS

But what is fast and what is slow walking?

At the University of Pierre and Marie Curie in Paris, they have measured it as between 1.5 metres per second (slow) and 1.85 metres per second (fast).

Keen to find out... I measured the distance from my desk, to the other side of the hall, and the timed myself at my normal pace. In a highly unscientific test, I paced the 15 metres in 8.6 seconds, which I reckon is about 1.75 metres per second – or towards the speedy end of the French scale.

However, I feel that my pace must vary depending on the time of day, the weather, and the destination.

I'm likely to be far more speedy walking to the Red Lion in Manningtree on a Friday night than I am walking in to the office on a Monday morning – or most definitely when I'm out shopping with Mrs Lumsden.

So, following the logic of the many esteemed scientists who have studied this if they

about to take place)... and if they saw me walking round Marks & Spencer ladies fashion department, they might conclude I am heading for imminent death, dementia or possible suicide.

Schoolboys dawdle, young couples in love amble and tourists stroll. All belying the walking speed theory. Yet commuters speed walk along London's streets with their heads buried in smartphones and while they pass

these studies with a pinch of salt. None of us knows what is round the corner, and that is probably for the best.

But I do believe in the power of positive thinking and a fair bit of self belief. I believe I will be here and probably still dragging my feet round the shops in 2020 and I aim to make the most of the time in between.

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