

Longevity: the new ultimate luxury?

Long confined to research laboratories, longevity has become one of the new frontiers of luxury. Medical clinics, beauty houses, investors and entrepreneurs are all rushing into the field with a shared promise: to live longer, but above all, to live better.

Behind this new obsession, however, lies a far more complex reality, where science meets marketing... and where the quest for better health can sometimes become a source of anxiety.



A few years ago, the ultimate expression of luxury was owning something other people could not have: a watch produced in only a handful of pieces, a work of art, an exceptional car, a suite in a palace hotel... Today, desire seems to have changed.

True luxury is no longer simply about owning more. It is about preserving something no one can buy: **time**.

Not the time that passes on a watch, but the amount of time our bodies are capable of living in good health. This shift is far from insignificant. It is gradually redrawing the contours of contemporary luxury.

Beauty houses no longer talk about anti-aging, but about Skin Longevity. Luxury hotels are developing preventive medicine programmes. Clinics welcome clients from around the world for highly sophisticated biological assessments. In Silicon Valley, some entrepreneurs are investing billions of dollars in ageing research. And everywhere, the same vocabulary is taking hold: **healthspan**, biomarkers, functional medicine, biological age, optimisation.



The promise is seductive: delay disease, preserve cognitive abilities, slow ageing, remain independent for longer. But behind this enthusiasm lies a first source of confusion.

What exactly are we talking about when we talk about longevity?

Longevity Is Not About Living Forever

Contrary to the image conveyed by some narratives, longevity medicine has never aimed to make human beings immortal.

Its ambition is much more pragmatic.

“Longevity is not about living forever. It is about staying healthy for as long as possible,” explains **Gunter Festel**, founder of the Swiss Institute of Longevity.

This distinction is essential.

For decades, medical advances have increased our life expectancy. In France, it now exceeds 85 years for women and 80 for men. Yet those additional years are not always lived in good health.

This is precisely what has led researchers to rethink their approach. They no longer speak only of lifespan, meaning the total number of years lived; they now speak of healthspan.

In other words: the number of years lived without major disability, loss of independence or a significant decline in quality of life.

This distinction fundamentally changes the way we approach ageing. The goal is no longer simply to add years to life. It is to add life to those years.

This approach is based on a relatively recent idea: ageing is not simply a consequence of the passage of time. It is also a collection of biological mechanisms that researchers are gradually beginning to understand.

Over the past fifteen years or so, research into senescent cells, chronic inflammation, the microbiome, epigenetics and biomarkers has profoundly reshaped our understanding of ageing. Without promising to stop it, these developments are



Yet as science advances, another phenomenon is emerging.

The word **longevity** has become ubiquitous, and sometimes ends up meaning everything and its opposite.

Wellness, Prevention, Performance... The Great Confusion

Today, all it takes is a glance at social media or the websites of numerous brands to see that the term “longevity” is everywhere.

For Jan Gerber, CEO of Paracelsus Recovery, this confusion has become one of the sector’s main problems.

“The terms wellness, performance, healthspan, preventive medicine and longevity

medicine are now being used as though they all referred to the same thing. Yet they absolutely do not mean the same thing.”

The distinction is far from merely semantic. Wellness primarily relates to lifestyle: physical activity, relaxation, nutrition and recovery. Performance seeks to optimise physical or intellectual capabilities. Preventive medicine aims to prevent identified diseases through screening or by reducing risk factors. Longevity medicine, meanwhile, pursues a much more specific objective.

“When practised seriously, it seeks to understand and act on the biological mechanisms of ageing, drawing on scientific evidence, diagnostics and medical monitoring.”

This distinction may seem technical, but it is nevertheless fundamental.

Because it draws a boundary between two worlds: on one side, a medical discipline that is still taking shape; on the other, a market whose economic potential is already attracting the biggest companies.

Why All the Excitement?

Beyond this terminological confusion, one question remains: why is longevity generating so much interest today?

The answer lies as much in advances in medicine as in changes in our society. Over the course of just a few decades, life expectancy has increased considerably in most developed countries. This progress, long regarded as an absolute triumph of modern medicine, is now revealing its own limitations. Because living longer does not necessarily mean living better. The additional years are often accompanied by chronic diseases, a gradual loss of independence or cognitive decline, placing a

burden both on individuals and healthcare systems.

It is precisely in response to this challenge that longevity medicine emerged. Unlike traditional medicine, which generally intervenes once a disease is already established, it seeks to act much earlier—sometimes several years before the first symptoms appear. Its ambition is not to replace existing treatments, but to better understand the biological mechanisms that lead to ageing, so that their effects can be slowed where possible.

For Gunter Festel, this evolution represents a genuine paradigm shift.

“There is now an extremely strong scientific core, driven by new therapies, early diagnostics and personalised medicine,” he explains.

Advances in genomics, proteomics, biomarkers and artificial intelligence now make it possible to observe ageing with a level of precision that would have been unimaginable just twenty years ago. The challenge is no longer simply to treat a disease, but to identify the first signs of an imbalance before it develops into a pathology.



This preventive approach also explains why longevity is attracting so many investors. Over the past decade, funding devoted to ageing biotechnology, personalised medicine and diagnostic tools has grown spectacularly. Behind this economic interest lies a conviction widely shared among researchers: if the main diseases associated with ageing—cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases—share common biological mechanisms, then a better understanding of ageing could make it possible to act on several of them simultaneously.

The role of the Swiss Institute of Longevity fits precisely within this logic. Contrary to what its name might suggest, the institute is neither a clinic nor a research laboratory. It supports researchers whose discoveries have potential industrial applications, helping them cross a crucial stage: turning a scientific innovation into a concrete solution.

“Many scientists achieve promising results, but they do not know how to turn them into companies or products. Our role is to support them through this transition,” explains Gunter Festel.

Among the projects supported by the institute are studies into new molecules derived from plant research, which could potentially find applications in brain health, cosmetics or preventive medicine.

This scientific and financial ferment has not escaped the attention of another player whose very business is to capture the deepest desires of its clients: luxury.

When Luxury Decides to Invest in Time

If longevity now occupies such an important place in the strategies of luxury brands, it is not only because science is advancing. It is also because luxury itself is redefining what it sells.

For decades, luxury was built around objects. A watch, a handbag, a piece of jewel-

lery or a car represented personal achievement as much as a sign of social success. Then, gradually, experiences took over. Hospitality, gastronomy, travel and wellness became natural extensions of the great luxury brands. Today, a new stage appears to be opening: health.

For Jonathan Siboni, founder of Luxurysight, this evolution is hardly surprising.

“Luxury was first built around the object, then around the experience. Today, it is turning its attention to what probably has the greatest value: health, energy and time.”

For him, this shift is part of a longer transformation in the very meaning of luxury.

“Luxury once reflected a form of success and modernity: I have made it, I am modern, therefore I have this brand. Then it evolved towards success and identity. Today, it represents almost nothing but identity, not even necessarily success anymore: displaying your success has become a form of vulgarity.”

And it is precisely in this quest for identity that health is acquiring unprecedented value.

“What you cannot buy is health and youth. Ultimately, what has the greatest value is what you cannot buy.”

This evolution reflects a profound transformation in consumer expectations. Wealthier clients are no longer looking only for rare products; they are now investing in their quality of life. Spending on prevention, personalised nutrition and health assessments is becoming just as important, and sometimes more important, than spending on material goods.

The phenomenon is particularly visible in hospitality. Spas, once focused primarily on relaxation, are gradually moving closer to genuine preventive health centres. The programmes on offer are no longer limited to massages or beauty treatments: they

now incorporate biological analyses, medical consultations, nutritional support, recovery protocols and comprehensive metabolic assessments.



The same evolution can be seen in beauty. For decades, brands built their messaging around fighting wrinkles. Today, they speak more about cellular ageing, regeneration and Skin Longevity. The change may appear merely lexical. In reality, it reflects a much deeper transformation: the goal is no longer simply to correct the visible signs of ageing, but to act on the mechanisms that cause them.

This approach appeals to a clientele that is no longer looking simply to appear younger, but to preserve their physical, cognitive and emotional capacities over the long term.

Even so, it would be reductive to regard this evolution as merely a marketing trend. Behind the repositioning of brands lies an unavoidable demographic reality. By 2050, one person in six worldwide will be over the age of 65, compared with one in eleven today, according to the World Health Organization. This transition is forcing healthcare systems to rethink their approach to ageing, but it is also pushing luxury companies to imagine new forms of support. Some clinics have gained a head start.

This is notably the case with Clinique La Prairie in Switzerland, often regarded as

one of the pioneers of longevity medicine. Founded in 1931 in Montreux, it has for decades welcomed an international clientele seeking an approach combining preventive medicine, nutrition, physical activity and recovery. Its famous Revitalisation programme, long associated with a highly discreet clientele, has played a major role in popularising the idea that one can invest in one's health capital just as one invests in one's financial assets.



Since then, other establishments have followed suit. Lanserhof, in Germany and the United Kingdom, has developed an approach centred on integrative medicine and regeneration. In Spain, SHA Wellness Clinic combines conventional medicine, nutrition, neuroscience and medical technologies. Chenot, with locations notably in Switzerland and Italy, has built its reputation on a method combining diagnostics, detoxification and personalised prevention. Meanwhile, Aman and Six Senses are gradually expanding their offerings to include functional medicine programmes, metabolic monitoring and sleep support.

These establishments no longer sell simply a stay; they offer a promise.

The promise of leaving with a better understanding of one's body, one's risk factors and the habits that may help preserve one's health over the long term.

This evolution reflects an even deeper shift. Luxury is no longer content to satisfy a desire for escape; it is now entering a domain long reserved for medicine. The boundaries between hospitality, wellness and healthcare are becoming increasingly porous, to the point where some establishments now resemble preventive health centres more than hotels.

But this convergence also raises an essential question. When the same vocabulary is used by doctors and cosmetics brands alike, how can we distinguish what belongs to scientific research from what belongs to marketing?

The Invisible Boundary Between Science and Marketing

While advances in research are very real, they are accompanied by another, much harder-to-grasp evolution: the appropriation of the concept of longevity by marketing. From dietary supplements to cosmetics, connected devices to wellness retreats, everyone now claims a place in this new ageing economy. Yet this ubiquity contributes to blurring the boundaries.



Gunter Festel observes the same shift:

“There is a genuine scientific revolution taking place. But at the same time, many companies today are doing exactly what they were doing twenty years ago. They have simply replaced the term ‘anti-aging’ with ‘longevity’.”

Jan Gerber shares this assessment. In his view, the longevity industry is currently going through a phase comparable to that experienced by the wellness sector some twenty years ago: a period in which genuine scientific advances coexist with commercial narratives that sometimes tend to exaggerate the expected benefits.

“A large proportion of what is currently being sold under the longevity label is in reality wellness or performance marketing disguised as medicine,” he believes. “What matters to me is that longevity medicine remains grounded in clinical reality and is honest about what we know... as well as what we do not yet know.”

This distinction is essential. Because while longevity medicine is based on scientific data, diagnostics and clinical monitoring, it should not be confused with practices whose benefits can sometimes be difficult to demonstrate.

Jonathan Siboni makes the same observation from an economic perspective. In his view, the market has already begun separating promises from clinical reality.

“Most of the players who entered the longevity space by investing large amounts of money have gone bankrupt. These huge medical structures that charge you several thousand dollars for a comprehensive assessment—half of it doesn’t work, because medicine is a real science. It isn’t marketing.”

Specialists also emphasise one point: there is currently no intervention capable of stopping or reversing ageing. However, some approaches can already reduce risk factors, delay the onset of chronic diseases or preserve physical and cognitive abilities for longer. Regular physical activity, a balanced diet, quality sleep, maintaining muscle mass and cardiovascular prevention remain, to date, the strategies for which the evidence is strongest.

In other words, longevity medicine is not based on a miracle formula. Above all, it follows a preventive approach founded on the gradual accumulation of scientific evidence.

This distinction is far from trivial. It shapes the way patients perceive their own health and, more broadly, the way society views ageing. Because while longevity medicine is grounded in a scientific approach, it now operates in an environment where every innovation is immediately shared, interpreted and sometimes simplified by social media, influencers and brands. Ageing is no longer merely a medical subject; it has become an object of communication.

And it is precisely at this point that the issue moves beyond biology. Because when we constantly seek to measure, optimise and control every parameter of our bodies, another question eventually emerges: how far can we go in trying to extend our lives before that pursuit itself becomes a source of suffering?

When Self-Care Becomes an Obsession

This is precisely the evolution Jan Gerber has observed for several years at Paracelsus Recovery. After working with entrepreneurs, executives and wealthy families, he identified a recurring behaviour to which he has given a name: Longevity Fixation Syndrome.

It is not a medical diagnosis, but rather a phenomenon he describes as “the moment when the desire to live longer turns into an anxiety that ultimately comes to govern a person’s entire life.”

According to him, this evolution is driven by three factors. We now have an unprecedented amount of data about our bodies, the longevity industry constantly encourages self-optimisation, and highly demanding personalities find in this pursuit a new way of exercising their need for control.

“The people we see constantly monitor their sleep, their blood sugar, their biomarkers or their supplements. They no longer feel serenity. They feel fear. Self-care becomes permanent self-surveillance.”



One figure embodies this drift more than any other today: Bryan Johnson. The 48-year-old American tech entrepreneur spends several million dollars each year on an extraordinarily intensive optimisation protocol—dozens of supplements, continuous monitoring of his biomarkers and ongoing medical testing—with the stated ambition of pushing the limits of human life as far as possible. In July 2026, however, he revealed that he was suffering from autoimmune gastritis, a chronic and incurable disease in which the immune system attacks the cells of the stomach. “My stomach is eating itself,” he wrote.

The most troubling aspect lies in the paradox. The man who is perhaps the most measured person on the planet saw nothing coming: the disease remained silent for years, hidden behind a simple abnormally low ferritin level, before being detected

through endoscopy and biopsies. For many doctors, the case says something about the limitations of reducing health to the accumulation of data alone.

For Jan Gerber, the problem is not wanting to take care of your health. The boundary lies elsewhere.

“Two people can follow exactly the same protocol. For one, it fits naturally into a balanced life. For the other, it becomes their entire life. The difference lies not in what they do, but in why they do it.”

Jonathan Siboni echoes this idea by bringing it back to the very definition of good health.

“No great doctor talks about extremes. They all talk about homeostasis—that is, balance within the body. Extremes never lead to balance.”

This reflection aligns with the findings of several major studies on ageing. The most famous, the Harvard Study of Adult Development, has followed hundreds of participants for more than eighty years in an effort to identify the factors associated with a long and healthy life.

Its lesson is perhaps one of the most counterintuitive. While physical activity, diet and sleep all play an essential role, the quality of human relationships remains one of the strongest predictors of successful ageing.

In other words, no biomarker yet measures what may matter most.

Time: The New Frontier of Luxury

Just a few years ago, luxury houses primarily promised to make people dream. They sold rare objects, craftsmanship, heritage or experiences. Today, they are turning their attention to something even more fundamental: our ability to remain healthy.

This shift is far from insignificant. It reflects a profound change in our societies, where health is no longer perceived merely as a necessity, but as a form of capital to be preserved. In this context, longevity is emerging as a new frontier of innovation, at the intersection of medicine, biotechnology, hospitality and luxury.

But this promise can only hold if it remains faithful to what gives it legitimacy: science. Because while advances in research are opening unprecedented possibilities for understanding the mechanisms of ageing, they must not be confused with narratives promising to push the limits of human life indefinitely.

That is perhaps the clearest conclusion to emerge from the conversations conducted for this investigation. None of the experts interviewed speaks of immortality. Instead, they all describe a much more measured approach: preventing rather than curing, preserving rather than repairing, and enabling each person to age in the best possible conditions.

Perhaps that is where the true revolution of longevity lies. Not in the promise of living ever longer, but in the promise of living better.

Jan Gerber sums up the idea with disarming simplicity:



“A longer life is not automatically a better life. There is no longevity without mental health. What is the point of living longer if you are unhappy during those additional years?”

At a time when biomarkers, genetic tests and artificial intelligence are playing an increasingly important role in how we relate to our health, this conclusion is almost counterintuitive. Technology will undoubtedly continue to transform the way we prevent disease and support ageing. It will probably enable us to gain more years of healthy life.

But it will never replace what gives those years meaning.

And perhaps that, ultimately, is the ultimate luxury.