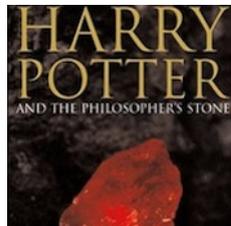


## [Harry Potter and the state pension age](#) [1]

Written by [Anton Howes](#) [2] | Thursday 7 October 2010



Researchers at the University of Milan [have discovered](#) [3] an "elixir of life", made up of amino acids and antioxidants that can boost the age of mice by 12%. The research team believes this "philosopher's stone" could be used by humans. In a number of years we could expect to see something similar appear on the market: not only does it boost lifespan, but it increases stamina and muscle co-ordination, so we may see many sprightly pensioners in coming years.

This may help reduce government spending on social care, particularly for the elderly, which was expected to double by 2035, but with life expectancy already on the rise and fast outstripping birth rates, such a move could force governments to raise the state pension ages much sooner than expected.

The original 1908 old age pension was to be paid at 70, at a time when life expectancy was around 50. Nowadays, life expectancy at birth is just under 80, and the state pension age will be 65 for both men and women by 2020. The new '[triple lock](#)' [4] on pensions means that they are unlikely to become less generous, so a further, faster increase in the pension age will be necessary. This age crunch was already inevitable - there will be a point at which supporting pensioners will be a huge burden on a much smaller number of younger, working taxpayers.

The Chancellor George Osborne has already hinted at plans to raise the age to 68 by 2046, but if we are to see a jump in life expectancy to something approaching 90 thanks to this "elixir", then a faster increase is inevitable. The unpleasant alternative would be to wait until it is too late, when the young people of today and of the future will have to shoulder our burgeoning state pensions, and then risk the uproar of those having to endure a sharp increase in the state pension age or a cut in its generosity. Much like dealing with the deficit, pension reform needs to be done as soon as possible so that a larger crisis can be averted.

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[3] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8044018/A-genuine-elixir-of-life-at-least-for-mice.html>

[4] <http://www.ftadviser.com/FinancialAdviser/Pensions/Personal/StatePensions/News/article/20100624/09e2f38c-7e07-11df-a5d0-00144f2af8e8/Chancellors-triple-lock-to-link-pensions-to-earnings.jsp>

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