

# HOW WE AGE

## The Journey Through Caregiving

### Myths Regarding Aging:

- **Most older adults will suffer with senility or dementia.**
- **The average older adult is either uninterested in or physically unable to participate in sexual activity.**
- **Older adults prefer to become less involved with their family and community as they age.**
- **In general, all older adults are alike.**
- **Losing one's memory is expected as you age.**



## Myths Regarding Aging:

- Urinary incontinence is a natural part of aging.
- Older adults should have decisions made for them because they are incapable of making them alone.
- Most older adults have incomes below the poverty level.
- Most older adults live in nursing homes.



## Factors in Aging:

- Disease
- Lifestyle
- Genetics
- Environment



## Losses that may affect the older adult might include:

- Death of a family member or friend
- Retirement
- Failing health
- Relocated from their home



## Caring for Yourself

- Maintain a positive outlook on life.
- Take good care of your health.
- Remain active.
- Stay in close contact with family and friends.
- Eat right.
- Remain mentally active, never stop learning.
- Know what you believe.



## Did You Know . . .

- Many older adults get depressed.
- Many people get depressed at some time in their lives.
- Body changes that come with aging can cause depression.
- Older women are depressed more often than men.
- Older adults are often most depressed in the early morning.
- A person needs help when signs of depression go on every day for more than 2 weeks.



## Symptoms of depression in older adults include:

- Changes in appetite and weight;
- Disturbed sleep;
- Self-neglect;
- Fatigue and loss of energy;
- Depressed or irritable moods;
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities;
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or excessive guilt;
- Difficulty in thinking or concentration
- Suicidal thinking or attempts.



## Osteoporosis Risk Factors Include:

- Age
- Female
- White or Asian
- Thin, petite body build
- Not taking estrogen if the uterus has been removed
- Cigarette smoking



## Osteoporosis Risk Factors Include:

- Heredity
- Not getting enough calcium throughout the life
- Alcoholism
- Using a lot of caffeine
- Inactivity
- Fair skin
- Early menopause
- Family history

(Adapted from Saxon, 52-53.)



## What can I do to prevent osteoporosis?

- Exercise every day.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Take extra calcium.



## Symptoms associated with arthritis:

- Swelling
- Warmth
- Redness
- Pain
- Popping and cracking of the joints



## Did You Know . . .

- People with arthritis need to stay active.
- Walking and/or swimming are good for arthritis.
- People with arthritis need to wear flat walking shoes with soft soles to put less stress on the joints.
- Arthritis is worse if you are overweight.
- Some doctors feel that omega-3 fatty acids are good for arthritis.
- Put ice on joints for 20 minutes after exercise.
- There are over-the-counter medicines for



## Did You Know that Skin . . .

- Is one of the parts of the body that changes the most with age.
- Heals more slowly as we age.
- Gets thinner and tears more easily.
- Gets loose and starts to sag.
- Develops spots and moles.
- Loses the layer of oil on the outside that holds in water.
- Bruises don't look the same as with younger people.



## Facts About Skin:


- The fat under the skin starts to get thinner and less stretchy.
- Older adults get more skin cancer, particularly if they have been in the sun a lot over the years.
- As we age we perspire less, which keeps the body from cooling in the heat.

(Adapted from Barnett, 159)



## What can be done to protect the skin?

- Wear sunscreen and protective clothing when in the sun.
- Do not use hot water when bathing.
- Limit the amount of time spent in chlorine water.
- Know which medications and diseases dry the skin.
- Stop smoking.
- Use lotions, soaps, or creams that do not contain alcohol or perfumes.
- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water a day.
- Check your body for changes.



## What helps our senses of taste and smell?

- Try using strong spices when you cook.
- Don't use extra salt on your food unless your doctor says it's O.K.
- Use artificial sweeteners
- Change the texture of your food.
- Use more colorful foods
- Put cold and hot foods together.
- Label your leftovers with the date.
- Keep your dentures clean.
- Let others help you find smells in your home that you may not notice.
- Let your family know about your loss of smell.



## What can I do to prevent burns or other skin damage?

- Do not smoke in bed or at times when you are sleepy.
- Make sure that sharp objects are picked up off the floor.
- Install GFI electrical outlets in bathrooms, bedrooms and outdoors.
- Don't wear loose fitting clothing when cooking.
- Set water heater temperature so water will not scald the skin.
- Insulate radiators and hot pipes.



## Common hearing changes for all older adults

- **Drying and thinning of the tissues in the ear canal**
- **Less able to hear high frequency sounds**
- **Difficulty in distinguishing between words that sound similar**
- **Ringing in the ears.**



## Common causes of hearing loss

- **Ear Wax Build-Up**
- **Changes in the Ear**
- **Exposure to Loud Noises**
- **Medications**
- **Diseases**



## Common medications that can cause hearing loss

- Aspirin
- Some arthritis drugs
- Some antibiotics
- Some water pills
- Some cancer medicines



## Common behaviors that may indicate a hearing loss

- Inattentiveness
- Inappropriate responses
- Frequent requests to repeat
- Complaints that people are mumbling
- Loud speech
- Loud volume of radio or TV
- An intense focus on your mouth as you speak
- Person consistently turns one ear towards conversations



## Hearing loss may lead to feelings of:

- Isolation
- Anger
- Fearfulness
- Anxiety
- Embarrassment
- Low Self Esteem
- Depression



## Common changes in vision

- Presbyopia
- Floaters
- Dry eyes
- Excessive tearing
- Yellowing lens
- Light intensity
- Depth perception



## Common changes in vision

- **Cataracts**
- **Glaucoma**
- **Senile Macular Degeneration**



## Factors linked with the formation of cataracts

- **High blood pressure**
- **Diabetes**
- **Exposure to various forms of radiation**
- **Glaucoma**



## Glaucoma treatment usually consists of:

- Special eye drops
- Oral medications
- Laser treatments
- Surgery



## Symptoms of degeneration include:

- Blurring of reading matter
- Distortion or loss of central vision
- Distortion in vertical lines



## Cues to Detect Vision Loss

- Squinting.
- Holding reading material at arms length.
- Failing to notice obvious objects.
- Difficulty driving at night.
- Wearing spotted, soiled or mismatched clothing.
- Wearing heavily applied makeup.
- Heavily using non-visuals
- Intense lighting is used.
- Sitting consistently nearest the direct source of light.



## Activities Impacted by Vision Loss

- Driving a car
- Grocery shopping
- Seeing markings on appliances
- Watching television
- Reading



## Techniques to aid the elder with vision loss

- Use more light in your home and use stronger light in your work or reading area.
- Use bright colors on the walls, chairs, and other things in the house.
- Use a light color for the walls and a dark color for the door.
- Use contrasting colors or add colored tape to floors that are at different levels



## Techniques to aid the elder with vision loss, cont.

- Reduce glare and avoid reflective surfaces.
- Use a magnifying glass to read.
- Avoid abrupt changes in light.
- Buy books and magazines with large print.

# Did You Know?

Organs deteriorate and become less efficient as we age.

## Heart

- Heart tissues may deteriorate and cardiac (heart) muscles decrease in size, leaving room for fat and calcium deposits.
- Heartbeats become fewer and more irregular.
- Blood volume becomes less.
- Aorta and blood vessels harden and shrink.
- The heart works harder but accomplishes less.



## Lungs

- Effectiveness of the lungs diminishes faster than the heart. (A 75-year-old's lungs are only 56% as efficient, the minimum breathing capacity is 43% and the maximum oxygen intake during exercise is only 40% that of a 30-year-old.)



## Digestive

**Digestive and elimination processes are less efficient.**



## Kidney

- Excretes (releases) less urine.
- Loses capacity so we need to urinate more frequently.

## Immune System



- More difficult to fight off diseases.
- Body can turn against itself, such as with arthritis.



## Nervous System

- Need 1-2 hours less sleep.
- Sleep is not as deep or refreshing.