

# Aging: What to expect (Mayo Clinic healthy aging-summary)

**Wonder what's considered a normal part of the aging process? Here's what to expect as you get older.**

By Mayo Clinic Staff

You know that aging will likely cause you to develop wrinkles and gray hair. But do you know how the aging process will affect your teeth, heart and sexuality? Find out what kind of changes you can expect in your body as you continue aging.

## **Your cardiovascular system--What's happening**

As you age, your heart rate becomes slightly slower, and your heart might become bigger. Your blood vessels and your arteries also become stiffer, causing your heart to work harder to pump blood through them. This can lead to high blood pressure (hypertension) and other cardiovascular problems.

## **Your bones, joints and muscles--What's happening**

With age, bones tend to shrink in size and density — which weakens them and makes them more susceptible to fracture. You might even become a bit shorter. Muscles generally lose strength and flexibility, and you might become less coordinated or have trouble balancing.

## **Your digestive system--What's happening**

Constipation is more common in older adults. Many factors can contribute to constipation, including a low-fiber diet, not drinking enough fluids and lack of exercise. Medications — such as diuretics and iron supplements — and certain medical conditions — such as diabetes and irritable bowel syndrome — also might contribute to constipation.

## **Your bladder and urinary tract--What's happening**

Loss of bladder control (urinary incontinence) is common with aging. Certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, might contribute to incontinence — as can menopause, for women, and an enlarged prostate, for men.

## **Your memory--What's happening**

Memory might naturally become less efficient with age. It might take longer to learn new things or remember familiar words or names.

## **Your eyes and ears--What's happening**

With age, you might have difficulty focusing on objects that are close up. You might become more sensitive to glare and have trouble adapting to different levels of light. Aging also can affect your eye's lens, causing clouded vision (cataracts).

Your hearing also might diminish. You might have difficulty hearing high frequencies or following a conversation in a crowded room.

## **Your teeth--What's happening**

Your gums might pull back (recede) from your teeth. Certain medications, such as those that treat allergies, asthma, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, can also cause dry mouth. As a result, your teeth and gums might become slightly more vulnerable to decay and infection.

## **Your skin--What's happening**

With age, your skin thins and becomes less elastic and more fragile with a simultaneous decrease of fatty tissue just below the skin. You might notice that you bruise more easily. Decreased production of natural oils might make your skin drier. Wrinkles, age spots and small growths called skin tags are more common.

## **Your weight--What's happening**

Maintaining a healthy weight is more difficult as you get older. As you age, your muscle mass decreases and body fat takes its place. Since fat tissue burns fewer calories than does muscle, you need fewer calories to maintain your current weight.

## **Your sexuality--What's happening**

With age, sexual needs and performance might change. Illness or medication might affect your ability to enjoy sex. For women, vaginal dryness can make sex uncomfortable. For men, impotence might become a concern. It might take longer to get an erection, and erections might not be as firm as they used to be.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/healthy-aging/in-depth/aging/art-20046070?pg=1>

copied and edited Nov 30 2016