

Aging: What's Normal, What's Not



Is your health declining as you age? While some medical issues come with the territory of getting older, others may be cause for concern. Do you know what's normal and what's worth a discussion with your doctor?

Hearing

Common: Some hearing loss, especially in men – is usual in people age 60 and older, as the inner ear loses sensory receptors. Sounds may become muffled, and higher-pitched sounds may become more difficult to hear. However, assistive devices, such as hearing aids and amplified telephones, may be able to help.

Discuss with your doctor if you have pain, drainage from the ear, a sudden loss of hearing or a substantial difference in hearing from one ear to the other. These could be signs of an infection or tumor.

Memory

Common: Brief memory lapses are not unusual as people age, and it also can be harder for older adults to multitask as their body's ability to process information starts to slow down.

However, older adults should still be able to learn new things, retain knowledge and recall memories.

Discuss with your doctor if you are encountering memory issues that impair your daily living, and if you're not able to learn and retain new information. Your cognitive issues may be signs of something more serious, such as dementia or Alzheimer's.

Preventive Care is Key

Be sure to get annual physicals, regardless of your age. Wellness visits give your doctor an opportunity to detect and treat potential health problems before you feel sick.

Mood

Common: Sadness in response to adverse events in life, such as the death of a loved one or the diagnosis of a serious medical issue, is normal. These feelings ease on their own with time.

Discuss with your doctor if you are consistently dealing with feelings of hopelessness, guilt, pessimism, fatigue and/or worthlessness, as you may have depression, a treatable medical condition. Physical aches and pains, as well as difficulty concentrating and remembering details, also are signs of depression.

Vision

Common: Needing reading glasses after age 40 is normal, as eye lenses become stiff and don't easily adjust when refocusing between near and far.

Discuss with your doctor if you find your peripheral or central vision deteriorating, which are signs of glaucoma or macular degeneration.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WebMD®

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