

Aging Women: Ways to Stay Healthier

Like a surprise visit from your least favorite relative, aging can bring more than you'd bargained for: a few more wrinkles, a little less stamina, floppy arms, baggy kneecaps.... Sound familiar? Worse, though, are the big health changes that may accompany aging. Many of these you can't even see. Here are some tips to point you in a healthier direction.

Where's the fat? As it turns out, not all fat is created equal. Where you carry your fat can make a big difference, especially as you age. A recent study of women in their seventh decade of life found that being overweight or obese didn't shorten their lives, *unless* the weight was carried at their waists. The risk of death was consistently higher in women with waists measuring more than 31.5 inches. However, there was an exception: Compared with white or black women, Latinas had lower death rates at any waist measurement or body mass index (BMI).¹

A second study also found that pockets of fat near the heart can be a hazard for women as estrogen levels drop after menopause. For the first time, researchers have shown a link between this type of fat and the risk of calcium build-up in the heart's blood vessels.² Bottom line? As you age, healthy diet and physical exercise are more important than ever to reduce your risk of heart disease.

The new smoking: sitting. When it comes to activity, your cells apparently don't lie. Each day, do you sit for more than 10 hours and get fewer than 40 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity? If so, your cells might be eight years older than your actual age! That's what a recent research study found when assessing nearly 1,500 women, aged 64 to 95.³ A second small study of 70 women also found that walking briskly at least 150 minutes a week can improve weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels in as little as 10 weeks.⁴ Moral of the story? Enjoy that retirement, but keep moving!

Medications for older women. As you age, you're more likely to take medication. And, in general, women are more likely to take more drugs than men. Over

age 65, 9 in 10 take at least one drug a week and more than four in 10 take at least five different drugs a week. Twelve percent take 10 or more drugs per week.⁵

But as you age, your body changes. It contains less water and more fat, which changes how your body processes medication. Also, your kidneys and liver may be less able to rid your body of drugs.⁵

What does this all mean for you? It means taking medications over age 65 is more likely to cause side effects and drug interactions.⁵ And that means that our teamwork is more important than ever. Let's stay in touch to be sure you are on the right type and dose of medications.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources

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