

is this normal? ←



yes, getting
older means
dealing with
changes, but
when these
changes
aren't typical,
it's time to
take note

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vision loss

WHEN IT'S NORMAL:

You notice it in your 40s: The newspaper print isn't as sharp as it used to be. It's common to have trouble reading fine print as you get older (the term is presbyopia). Other inconvenient, but usually harmless, age-related eye problems include dry eyes and tearing. And floaters, those spots floating across your field of vision, are usually not serious.

WHEN IT'S NOT: One in three Americans will suffer a sight-related disease by age 65. Seniors are particularly prone to cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration. Cloudy, blurry vision, glare and frequent changes in prescription eyeglasses or contacts can signal cataracts. Glaucoma symptoms may include the loss of side vision, eye swelling, red eyes and, in the elderly, nausea and vomiting. Macular degeneration gradually destroys your sharp, central vision, according to the National Eye Institute. Also, sudden floaters along with flashes of light could mean a detached retina.

weight gain

WHEN IT'S NORMAL: Most studies suggest that typical Americans gain about 1 pound of fat per year beginning in their 30s. A big reason is that metabolism naturally slows with age. Unless you lower your caloric intake and increase activity, chances are you'll add a pound with each new birthday candle.

WHEN IT'S NOT: Weight gain can be a sign of a serious problem when it comes with certain symptoms, according to the National Institutes of Health. Rapid weight gain along with constipation; hair loss; sensitivity to cold; swollen feet; shortness of breath; uncontrollable hunger accompanied by palpitations, tremors and sweating; or vision problems can be signs of heart disease or diabetes.



the blues


WHEN IT'S NORMAL: It's normal for people of all ages to feel down from time to time. This especially can happen after a stressful event, such as losing a loved one, moving or suffering a health problem. There is no need to worry, as long as the feelings do not persist.

WHEN IT'S NOT: Although depression often is dismissed as a normal part of aging, it's not, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. People should be able to enjoy life in their twilight years. So, when someone feels persistently sad, anxious or "empty," depression—not age—could be the culprit. Other signs include losing pleasure in previously fun activities and feeling worthless, fatigued or irritable.



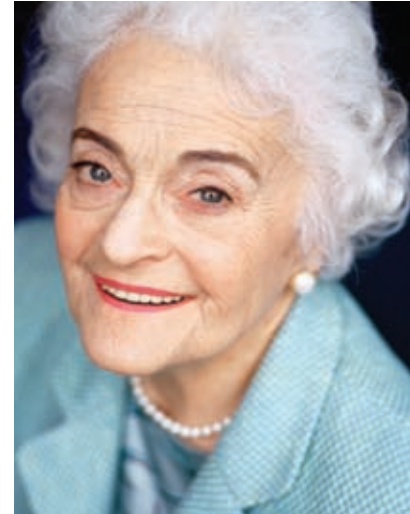


bone loss



WHEN IT'S NORMAL: Women may lose bone mass rapidly for several years during menopause, while men lose it more slowly. But by age 65 or 70, men and women are losing bone density at the same rate. A common diagnosis among older adults is osteopenia, or low bone mass. This is a red flag, but it's not too late to strengthen your bones and prevent osteoporosis.

WHEN IT'S NOT: Millions of Americans have osteoporosis, although most don't know it until they fall and break a bone or realize they are getting significantly shorter. It's most common in Caucasian and Asian women, although 2 million men have the disease. You are more at risk if you have a family history, broke a bone as an adult, had ovaries removed before menopause, had early menopause, suffered a lack of calcium throughout life or have a small body frame, according to the National Institute on Aging.



free publications

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am i losing my mind?

One of the biggest fears associated with aging is losing the ability to think clearly. Knowing the difference between a "senior moment" and a disease like Alzheimer's can be tricky—and important.

"Most of us probably will experience some decline in cognitive performance as we get older," says Molly Wagster, Ph.D., chief of the Neuropsychology of Aging Branch at the National Institute on Aging.

But that decline doesn't necessarily signal a serious disease. A few hallmarks of aging are perfectly normal and no cause for concern. "They are nuisances. They frustrate and aggravate people as they age, but they generally don't interfere with their ability to do what they need."

These "senior moments" aren't worrisome unless they interfere with your ability to carry out everyday functions, such as balancing a checkbook, managing a household or carrying out job duties. It's normal to forget where you placed your keys, for instance, but if you forget you were looking for your keys, it could be a sign of Alzheimer's.

