

# Healthy Aging: Physical Changes in Women

As you age your body goes through changes.

Menopause is one way a woman experiences these changes.

It occurs when a woman's ovaries stop producing estrogen and menstruation ceases.

For some people hormone replacement therapy can help.

Hormone replacement therapy has risks and isn't recommended for some people, or for a long period of time.

Talk with your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.

A condition called osteoporosis is another way that your body can change as you age. This is a heightened risk of the loss of bone mass or density, which in turn can increase the odds of serious injuries such as hip fractures.

The good news is that weight training, nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D and, when needed, medications will help keep a woman's bones strong.

As women age, the lifelong wear and tear on weight-bearing joints, particularly the hips and knees, may result in painful arthritis.

One tip for women with arthritis to consider: trade in your high heels for a sensible pair of walking shoes. Women also should know that the long-term use of anti-inflammatory medications can irritate the stomach and eventually cause ulcers.

Your eyes, ears, teeth, and skin are also affected by aging.

You should get regular eye exams to check for glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.

Our ears also undergo changes, most commonly a gradual hearing loss seen in older adults but more severe in women who were exposed to loud noises earlier in life.

And women shouldn't overlook their need for dental care as they get older.

*"Remember to floss. Because, believe it or not, in us humans, a large part of inflammation is caused by gum inflammation and you can prevent that by flossing and seeing a dental professional twice a year."*

Your skin is the most noticeable part of the body and usually the first to show signs of aging.

The keys to healthy skin are keeping it clean and moist. Women also should consider the weekly use of an exfoliant to remove skin cells.

Watch your skin and look for any changes you notice, such as a mole. Get these checked out by your health care provider.

Aging also leads to changes in the gastrointestinal tract.

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These changes can hinder absorption of vitamin B12, which the body needs to make red blood cells and maintain a healthy nervous system.

More than half of adults have experienced hemorrhoids by the time they reach age 50.

Talk to your healthcare provider about self-care measures that can manage the mild pain and inflammation from hemorrhoids.

One aspect of aging that many women fear involves the involuntary leakage of urine, otherwise known as urinary incontinence.

Aging alone typically won't lead to incontinence unless there is another problem.

Urine leakage is never normal and should always be evaluated. Fortunately, the problem usually can be resolved.

As you age your body continues to change. Keep up to date with your healthcare provider.

Talk to them about what you are experiencing and work together to help limit some of changes that life brings us.