

HOW THE BODY AGES

A Guide To Physical Deterioration

Thinning hair: One of the body's first warnings that the party's over. Time to dig out your old Yankees cap.

Body hair: The graying hair that flutters from your head magically takes root in the ears, nostrils, and even on the snoulicers.

The "Paunch": Once you hit the big 3-0, your body begins to redistribute fat from under the skin to the abdomen. Every slice of pizza you ever ate is now hanging over your belt.

Sex Organs: Although fertile throughout life, older men take up to three times longer to get an erection than their younger counterparts—and produce only half as much semen.

Knees: Time to pay the piper for years of pick-up basketball games. The once-spongy cartilage protecting the knee joints is now flat and tattered.

Brain: Scores of brain cells are lost or damaged over the years. The brain adapts by increasing the number of connections, or synapses, which carry messages between brain cells.

Teeth: Start making oatmeal. Three of four adults over 35 get gum disease. Forty-two percent of Americans over 65 are totally toothless.

Lungs: Breathe deeply. Between the ages of 20 and 70, maximum lung capacity can shrink by almost 40 percent.

Muscles: Time to flex. Muscle mass deflates by as much as 23 percent between ages of 30 and 70—though exercise can prevent this loss.

Skin: Supporting cells that attach the inner and outer layers of skin begin to break down. Telltale signs: wrinkles and baggy knees.

Sources: American Dental Association; *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, Third Edition, (Academic Press Inc., 1990); *Women's Encyclopedia of Health and Emotional Healing* (Rodale Press, 1993).

Life span: Peace at last. Women live an average of seven years longer than men.

Bosom: The fight against gravity becomes a losing battle as breasts begin their downward droop into pancake oblivion.

Menopause: Say hello to hot flashes, insomnia, and mood swings—all telltale signs of reduced estrogen levels. The good news: Sex gets better thanks to increased levels of hormones secreted by the adrenal glands.

Varicose veins: One in five women suffer from the spider-web woes. The human equivalent of a clogged fuel line, varicose veins begin to swell into unsightly lumps when valves fail, causing blood to pool and exert pressure on vein walls.

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