



PMCare Capsule

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CAPSULE THEME

OLD AGE DISEASES

Health Care for the Old Age

The Aging Process

Menopause

Suggestions to Remain Healthy

INSIDE

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PM CARE wishes all our Hindu clients and members



Happy Deepavali.

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Health Care in Old Age

Millions of senior citizens across the globe are not getting the proper health care they need because governments and the society are not aware enough of the problems. By 2025, there will be about 1200 million people aged 65 years and above according to UN estimates. Failure to address oral health needs today could develop into a costly problem tomorrow. Seven per cent of the 1.1 billion Indian population today are over the age of 60. They too wish to have a better access to health care, look forward to fun, health, dignity, economic independence and peaceful death. They cannot afford to be ill as sickness is expensive.



Japan is the most elderly country in the history of the world. Its average life span, 82 years and soaring, is creating an entirely new kind of society. Twenty-three percent of the population is 65 or over, as against a mere 13 percent under 15. Care for the elderly consumes half the national health budget. By 2055, the government predicts, half of its population will be pensioners.

About 47 countries during the past 10 years, the number of older persons had doubled and in most developing countries, the population of older persons had increased by 50 per cent. In European countries, older people worked right through old age and a good part of their earnings went back into the households, for infant care, for children and mothers, for food and health care access.

Some health problems and common ailments that generally affect senior citizens are blood pressure, cardiac problems, diabetes, joint pains, kidney infections, cancer, tuberculosis etc. Once they occur, these diseases may take a long time to heal due to old age. So it is important to get medical checkups regularly to prevent the onset of any of these health conditions.

The Aging Process

As we age, our bodies change in many ways that affect the function of both individual cells and organ systems. These changes occur little by little and progress inevitably over time. However, the rate of this progression can be very different from person to person. Research in aging is beginning to find out the reasons for these changes and the genetic and environmental factors that control them.

Genetic and Environmental Factors

The aging process depends on a combination of both genetic and environmental factors. Recognizing that every individual has his or her own unique genetic makeup and environment, which interact with each other, helps us understand why the aging process can occur at such different rates in different people. Overall, genetic factors seem to be more powerful than environmental factors in determining the large differences among people in aging and lifespan. There are even some specific genetic disorders that speed up the aging process, such as Hutchinson-Gilford, Werner's and Down syndromes. However, many environmental conditions, such as the quality of health care that you receive, have a substantial effect on aging. A healthy lifestyle is an especially important factor in healthy aging and longevity. These environmental factors can significantly extend lifespan.

Behaviours of a Healthy Lifestyle

- Not smoking
- Exercising
- Getting adequate rest
- Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables
- Coping with stress
- Having a positive outlook

Cellular Changes Associated with Aging

Aging causes functional changes in cells. For example, the rate at which cells multiply tends to slow down as we age. Certain cells those are important for our immune system to work properly (called T-cell lymphocytes) also decrease with age. In addition, age causes changes in our responses to environmental stresses or exposures, such as ultraviolet light, heat, not enough oxygen, poor nutrition and toxins (poisons) among others.

Age also interferes with an important process called apoptosis, which programs cells to self-destruct or die at appropriate times. This process is necessary for tissues to remain healthy and it is especially important in slowing down immune responses once an infection has been cleared from the body.

Different diseases that are common in elderly people can affect this process in different ways. For example, cancer results in a loss of apoptosis. The cancer cells continue to multiply and invade or take over surrounding tissue, instead of dying as originally programmed. Other diseases may cause cells to die too early. In Alzheimer's disease, a substance called amyloid builds up and causes the early death of brain cells, which results in a progressive loss of memory and other brain functions. Toxins produced as byproducts of nerve-cell transmissions are also thought to be involved in the death of nerve cells in Parkinson's disease.

Bodily Changes Associated with Aging

Our bodies normally change in appearance as we age.

Changes in Height

We all lose height as we age, although when the height loss begins and how quickly it progresses vary quite a bit among different people. Generally, our height increases until our late forties and then decreases about two inches by age 80. The reasons for height loss include the following:

- changes in posture
- changes in the growth of vertebrae (the bones that make up the spine)
- a forward bending of the spine
- compression of the discs between the vertebrae
- increased curvature of the hips and knees
- decreased joint space in the trunk and extremities
- joint changes in the feet
- flattening of the arches



The length of the bones in our legs does not change much.

Changes in Body Composition

The proportion of the body that is made up of fat doubles between age 25 and age 75. Exercise programs may prevent or reverse much of the proportional decrease in muscle mass and increase in total body fat. This change in body composition is important to consider in nutritional planning and level of activity. The change in body composition also has an important effect on how the body handles various drugs. For example, when our body fat increases, drugs that are dissolved in fatty tissues remain in the body much longer than when our body was younger and more muscular.



Changes in Weight

In men, body weight generally increases until their mid-fifties; then it decreases, with weight being lost faster in their late sixties and seventies. In women, body weight increases until the late sixties and then decreases at a rate slower than that of men.

People who live in less technologically developed societies do not show this pattern of weight change. This suggests that reduced physical activity and changes in eating habits may be the causes of the change in body weight rather than the aging process.

Other Changes with Aging

Normal aging in the absence of disease is a remarkably benign process. In other words, our body can remain healthy as we age. Although our organs may gradually lose some functions, we may not even notice these changes except during periods of great exertion or stress. We may also experience slower reaction times.

Normal Aging and Disease

Aging and disease are related in subtle and complex ways. Several conditions that were once thought to be part of normal aging have now been shown to be due to disease processes that can be influenced by lifestyle. For example, heart and blood vessel diseases are more common in people who eat a lot of meat and fat. Similarly, cataract formation in the eye largely depends on the amount of exposure to direct sunlight.

We should remember that there is a range of individual response to aging. Biologic and chronologic ages are not the same. In addition, body systems do not age at the same rate within any individual. For example, you might have severe arthritis or loss of vision while the function of your heart or kidneys is excellent. Even those aging changes that are considered "usual" or "normal" are not inevitable consequences of aging.

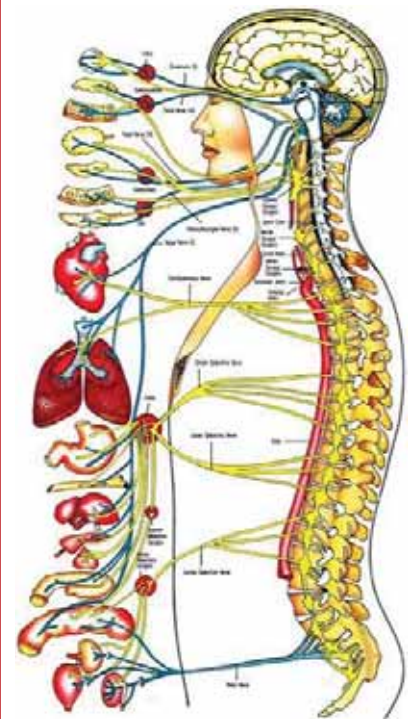
The way our body regulates certain systems changes with age. Some examples are listed below.

- Progressive changes in the heart and blood vessels interfere with your body's ability to control blood pressure.
- Your body cannot regulate its temperature as it could when you were younger. This can result in dangerously low body temperature from prolonged exposure to the cold or in heat stroke if the outside temperature is too high.
- There may be aging-related changes in your body's ability to develop a fever in response to an infection.
- The regulation of the amount and makeup of body fluids is slowed down in healthy older persons. Usual (resting) levels of the hormones that control the amount of body fluids are unchanged, but problems in fluid regulation commonly develop during illness or other stress. Also, elderly people don't feel as thirsty after water deprivation as they did when younger.

What do these age-related changes in our body systems mean?

- First, with advancing age, we become less like each other biologically, so our health care needs to be more individualized.
- Body systems that can be minimally affected by age are often profoundly influenced by lifestyle behaviors such as cigarette smoking, physical activity, and nutritional intake, and by circumstances such as financial means.
- Finally, it's helpful to consider ahead of time our possible choices in case certain situations arise. For example, if you become less physically able to take part in an athletic activity you did before, is there a different activity you might enjoy? Are there things you might like to do to keep your mind active? More serious situations to consider might include death of a spouse, or if you find your abilities becoming more and more limited. Have you discussed how you would like to handle such situations and your wishes with your family?

Changes in the Regulation of Body Systems



It is important to remember that the ability to learn and adjust continues throughout life and is strongly influenced by interests, activities and motivation. With years of rich experience and reflection, we can rise above our own circumstances. Old age, despite the physical limitations, can be a time of variety, creativity, and fulfillment.



If you're aged 50 or over then keeping your **body in good condition** is important. Taking full advantage of health checks and services, where they are available, could help keep you up and **running for longer.**

GET YOUR MEDICAL CHECKED TODAY!



PRE-MENOPAUSE IN WOMEN

Pre-menopause or menopause transition is the stage of a woman's reproductive life that begins several years before menopause, when the ovaries gradually begin to produce less estrogen. It usually starts in a woman's 40s but can start in a woman's 30s or even earlier as well.

Pre menopause lasts up until menopause, the point when the ovaries stop releasing eggs. In the last one to two years of pre menopause, this decline in estrogen accelerates. At this stage, many women experience menopausal symptoms.

How Long Does Pre-Menopause Last?

The average length of pre menopause is four years, but for some women this stage may last only a few months or continue for 10 years. Pre menopause ends the first year after menopause (when a woman has gone 12 months without having her period).

What are the Signs of Pre-Menopause?

You will know you are transitioning into menopause when you begin experiencing some or all of the following symptoms:

- Hot flashes
- Breast tenderness
- Worsening of premenstrual syndrome
- Decreased libido (sex drive)
- Fatigue
- Irregular periods
- Vaginal dryness; discomfort during sex
- Urine leakage when coughing or sneezing
- Urinary urgency (a pressing need to urinate more frequently)
- Mood swings
- Difficulty sleeping

How Do I know If Changes in My Periods are Normal Pre-Menopausal Symptoms or Something to be Concerned About?

Irregular periods are common and normal during pre menopause. But, other conditions can cause abnormalities in menstrual bleeding. If any of the following situations apply to you, see a doctor to rule out other causes:

- Your periods are very heavy or accompanied by blood clots.
- Your periods last several days longer than usual.
- You spot between periods.
- You experience spotting after sex.
- Your periods occur closer together.

Potential causes of abnormal bleeding include hormonal imbalances, birth control pills, pregnancy, fibroids, blood clotting problems or rarely cancer.

How is Pre-Menopause Diagnosed?

Often your doctor can make the diagnosis of pre menopause based on your symptoms. Blood tests to check hormone levels may also be beneficial but may be difficult to evaluate due to erratic fluctuations of hormones during this period. It may be more helpful to have several tests done at different times for comparison.

Can I Get Pregnant If I Am Pre-Menopausal?

Yes. Despite a decline in fertility during the pre menopause stage, you can still become pregnant. If you do not want to become pregnant, you should continue to use some form of birth control until you reach menopause (meaning you have gone 12 months without having your period).

For some women, getting pregnant can be difficult once they are in their late 30s to early 40s due to a decline in fertility. But, if becoming pregnant is the goal, there are fertility-enhancing treatments and techniques that can help you get pregnant.

Are There Treatments That Can Reduce the Symptoms Associated With Pre-Menopausal?

Many women experience relief from hot flashes after taking low-dose birth control pills for a short period of time. Other options that may control hot flashes include the birth control skin patch, vaginal ring and progesterone injections. Certain women should not use birth control hormones, so talk to your doctor to see if they are right for you.

You may also feel better if you do things that enhance your general well-being, such as:

- Exercise.
- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Get more sleep and try going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day.
- Decrease the amount of alcohol if you drink.
- Get to a healthy weight and stay there.
- Take a multivitamin supplement and ingest enough calcium.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water each day.

Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing problems with your sex drive. He or she may be able to recommend a counselor or therapist to help you and your partner work through this issue. Vaginal lubricants may also be recommended, if vaginal dryness is a problem.

MALE MENOPAUSE

Ladies, the so-called mid-life crisis that many men experience is not our imagination and neither is it theirs. As has been suspected some but not all, men will suffer male menopause. If you know someone who may be in male menopause understanding it may help you to help them. It is also important that you encourage the men in your life that may have symptoms, to discuss them with their doctor.

About Male Menopause

Male menopause is also called andropause. In men hormone levels are at the peak somewhere between 15 and 19. When men reach their late 20's testosterone levels begin to slowly decrease but normally stay within healthy limits. In his 40's or 50's up to half the men who suffer andropause will report uncomfortable symptoms. This helps to support a healthy sex drive, the generation and production of sperm. This can allow a man to father children well into his eighties.

All women at some point in time will go through menopause which is the cessation of fertility and menstrual cycles. Not all men will go through andropause. It is not known why andropause affects the men.

Causes of Male Menopause

In some men menopause/andropause will occur naturally. In other men there can be underlying triggers. Illness can affect hormone levels. Depression, dementia and obesity can also be triggers of andropause. Heart and lung diseases and autoimmune disease may go through andropause. A physical and tests run by your doctor can help determine if a man is in andropause or suffering with another health condition.

Early Signs of Male Menopause

Male menopausal symptoms are very similar to female menopause but much less intense. Have you noticed a man or men in your life being a bit more forgetful, irritable or exhibit a low energy level? These symptoms could be early signs of male menopause.

Male symptoms can include hot flashes and night sweats. Fatigue, joint pains and muscle aches are also possible. On the emotional side men can have mood swings, become more irritable and experience depression. They may appear to lose interest in sex or have difficulty with weak erections. They could feel like they no longer enjoy sex.

Many men do not like talking about their symptoms but should be encouraged to do so with the doctor at the onset of these symptoms to rule out other health conditions with similar symptoms.

Treatments of Male Menopause

It is also true that for treating early signs or symptoms of male menopause, hormone replacement therapy is the traditional choice of treatment. Testosterone replacement can reduce the symptoms for men. Erectile dysfunction treatments can also help to reduce treatments.

Illness in the Elderly

Although the elderly in our society are healthier than ever before, illness and its treatment in senior citizens requires special consideration.

Now that many of the childhood infectious diseases cause fewer infant deaths the bulk of illness is borne by the elderly. This is reflected in prescription rates: the over 60s make up around 18% of the UK population but this group consumes 33% of medicines. Almost 80% of over 65's are on one or more medicinal drugs.

In some ways this is a good thing; many of these drugs help older people to lead longer and more comfortable lives. However the burden on healthcare systems is considerable and growing, leading to increasing interest in the response of the elderly to disease and in keeping them as fit as possible.

Fitness in the Elderly

In younger people there is not much variation in fitness levels between individuals but this is not so in the elderly. Because people age at different rates and in different ways depending on genes and life-style, by the time we reach late middle age big differences in fitness levels exist between individuals. This of course has considerable bearing on response to illness or injury both of which are more likely in old age.

Regular exercise, good diet and keeping the mind active are important for everyone regardless of age but much more so in the elderly since these will help aging body systems stay in good condition. "Use it or lose it" applies here.

Response to Illness in the Elderly

Older people often respond to illness in different ways to younger people. This is usually due to having less reserve. Frequently they will produce different symptoms or no symptoms at all. For example, urinary tract infections, which are common in the elderly, may show no symptoms at all or seemingly unrelated features. Often there will be no pain in the bladder or

back or on passing urine and no fever, however there may well be mental confusion and sometimes hallucinations.

The mental effects are probably due to having insufficient reserve in the blood circulation. If blood is being diverted to the area of the infection and to support the immune system then blood flow through the brain will be less.

The lack of pain and fever is thought due to the nervous system becoming less sensitive. This has the potential to compound the problem since pain is a warning that something is wrong and fever helps combat infection and alerts us to its presence. Since senior citizens are likely to be given less warning of illness it highlights the need for regular check-ups and vigilance on the part of relatives or carers.

Response of the Elderly to Drugs

Most drugs are broken down by the liver and got rid of by the kidneys. The level of a drug in circulation at any one time depends on the efficiency of these organs. As we age these organs along with all the others become less efficient. A dose of a drug suitable for a young adult will rise to greater levels

and stay in the blood for longer in an older person and therefore the drug dose needs to be adjusted accordingly. However, as has been said there is much individual variation in fitness levels in older people and this naturally applies to their livers and kidneys as well as everything else. This makes predicting the effects of a drug and the likelihood of adverse reactions more difficult.

In addition drug companies, for obvious reasons, test their drugs mainly on young fit adults so much of their research on adverse drug reactions does not apply that closely to the elderly.



All this may sound a bit worrying but it should be remembered that older people are living longer and healthier lives. If you are worried about your health you should consult your doctor.



Suggestions to Remain Healthy

To remain healthy in old age, control your weight, blood pressure and diabetes, eat four to six portions of fruit or vegetables daily, do not smoke, avoid salt, drink alcohol in moderation, walk daily, maintain muscle strength and flexibility with exercise and sleep for six or seven hours a night .

Adopting healthful habits can significantly alter the course of aging and prevent common diseases. Here are some suggestions to remain healthy in old age:

- Sound sleep is essential. Old people may not sleep as deeply as they did when they were young due to some physical conditions. But disturbed sleep increases the risk of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, depression and hypertension.
- Exercise your brain by participating in mentally stimulating activities such as reading, writing, doing puzzles and play board games such as Scrabble or Chess.
- Strong social ties help a lot. Those who volunteered the most and had lots of connections to family and friends remain happy.
- Keep your eyes and ears fit by regular checkup. Vision and hearing tests by specialists should be a regular part of your anti-aging plan. Sight-threatening diseases that are more common with age, including cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration, can be controlled or halted if caught early. Hearing loss, the third most common chronic condition can contribute to cognitive decline, depression and social isolation. To reduce your risk of eye disease, avoid tobacco smoke, wear sunglasses, maintain a healthy weight and control high blood pressure and blood sugar levels. To reduce the risk of hearing loss, consider using earplugs in noisy places.
- Always contact with your doctor to keep blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels under control even as you get into your 70s and beyond.
 - Control your overweight. You should be especially vigilant against creeping weight gain.
 - Back pain is also the leading cause of disability, trailing only arthritis. Being able to stand straight and remain free of crippling lower-back pain in later years depends on maintaining the strength of the bones in your spine as well as the muscles that support them. Exercises that work muscles in the back and abdomen, such as abdominal curls and trunk extensions, may also help prevent spinal fractures. Activities such as pilates and yoga can help ease back pain.
 - To prevent or alleviate arthritis and joint pain, regular exercise is the only way. Resistance training doing calisthenics or using elastic bands, free weights or weight machines strengthens the muscles. That, in turn, protects the joints and makes them more stable.
 - The fear of falling in old age often causes anxiety. Generally 30 percent of older people between 65 and 80 and older have fallen at some point. Build strong legs by doing strength exercises.
- **Sound Sleep:** The team from the University of Warwick and Federico II University Medical School in Naples discovered recently that people who sleep for less than six hours a night are more likely to die early; The previous studies had shown that sleep deprivation was associated with heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol.

