



HELPING HANDS



HOW WE AGE

(excerpts from nia.nih.gov)

In the broadest sense, aging reflects all the changes that occur over the course of life. You grow. You develop. You reach maturity. To the young, aging is exciting—it leads to later bedtimes and curfews, and more independence. By middle age, another candle seems to fill up the top of the birthday cake. It's hard not to notice some harmless cosmetic changes like gray hair and wrinkles. Middle age also is the time when people begin to notice a fair amount of physical decline. Even the most athletically fit cannot escape these changes. Take marathon runners, for example. An NIA-funded study found that their record times increased with age—aging literally slowed down the runners. Although some physical decline may be a normal result of aging, the reasons for these changes are of particular interest to gerontologists.



Gerontologists look for what distinguishes normal aging from disease, as well as explore why older adults are increasingly vulnerable to disease and disability. They also try to understand why these health threats take a higher toll on older bodies. Since 1958, NIA's Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging (BLSA) has been observing and reporting on these kinds of questions. As with any longitudinal study, the BLSA repeatedly evaluates people over time rather than comparing a group of young people to a group of old people, as in a cross-sectional study. Using this approach, BLSA scientists have observed, for example, that people who have no evidence of ear problems or noise-induced hearing loss still lose some of their hearing with age—that's normal. Using brain scans to learn if cognitive changes can be related to structural changes in the brain, BLSA scientists discovered that even people who remain healthy and maintain good brain function late in life lose a significant amount of brain volume during normal aging.



However, some changes that we have long thought of as normal aging can be, in fact, the signs of a potential disease. Take, for example, sudden changes in personality. A common belief is that people become cranky, depressed, and withdrawn as they get older. But an analysis of long-term data from the BLSA showed that an adult's personality generally does not change much after age 30. People who are cheerful and assertive when they are younger will likely be the same when they are age 80. The BLSA finding suggests that significant changes in personality are not due to normal aging, but instead may be early signs of disease or dementia.

The rate and progression of cellular aging can vary greatly from person to person. But generally, over time, aging affects the cells of every major organ of the body. Changes can start early. Some impact our health and function more seriously than others. For instance, around the age of 20, lung tissue starts to lose elasticity, and the muscles of the rib cage slowly begin to shrink. As a result, the maximum amount of air you can inhale decreases. In the gut, production of digestive enzymes diminishes, affecting your ability to absorb foods properly and maintain a nutritional balance. Blood vessels in your heart accumulate fatty deposits and lose flexibility to varying degrees, resulting in what used to be called "hardening of the arteries" or atherosclerosis.

Scientists are increasingly successful at detailing these age-related differences because of studies like the BLSA. Yet studies that observe aging do not identify the reasons for age-related changes, and, therefore, can only go so far toward explaining aging. Questions remain at the most basic level about what triggers aging in our tissues and cells, why it occurs, and what are the biological processes underlying these changes. Scientists look deep into our cells and the cells of laboratory animals to find answers. What they learn today about aging at the cellular and molecular levels may, ultimately, lead to new and better ways to live a longer, healthier life.



AGING RESOURCES
Locating Benefits & Finding Care
(excerpts form hhs.gov)

- benefits.gov: -Your Path to Government Benefits Locate benefits you may be eligible for using the official benefits website of the U.S. government.
- medicare.gov -Sign up for Medicare benefits, find out if a service is covered, submit a Medicare claim, and more.
-Preventive Services Medicare covers many preventive and screening services to keep you healthy and help find problems early, when treatment is most effective.
-Compare Medicare Providers Find physicians, group practices, hospitals, home health agencies, and dialysis facilities based on star ratings, services offered, and quality of care.
- healthcare.gov -Medicare and the Health Insurance Marketplace Learn about the Health Insurance Marketplace and your Medicare benefits.
- faq.ssa.gov -Replacement Medicare Cards Learn how to get a replacement Medicare card.
- medicaid.gov -Your one-stop-shop for Federal policy and program information about Medicaid.
- eldercare.gov -Eldercare Locator Using your ZIP code or city and state, find resources in your community that provide information and assistance for older adults and caregivers.

**IAM Peer
Employee
Assistance
Program**



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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IAM EAP Calendar

2017 EAP I-IV

Classes

William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center

EAP I
Oct 1-6

EAP III
June 25-30

EAP IV
NEW DATE
October 29 - Nov. 3