Signs of (Perfectly Normal) Aging

Chances are you feel, look and behave differently than you did 20 or more years ago. Certainly some changes may be health related. But there are many that almost all of us do or will experience that are just plain and simply related to having more birthdays. I’m in my 50s and have started noticing some of these myself. I find it kind of fascinating really. Read on...

**Olfactory Function**

It’s rare when a senior totally loses their sense of smell, but by the age of 70–80 about 30 percent of people will have olfactory impairment. Scientifically this is called presbyosmia. Your flower garden may not smell as pungent or your morning coffee not as great. This might also impact your sense of taste which is covered below. Generally there is nothing that can be done about this loss and women seem to keep their sense of keen smell longer in life. However, it’s still a good thing to mention to your doctor since there are some medications that can cause this.

**Vision Changes**

One thing that I have recently noticed myself is frequently having dry eyes, especially toward the later part of the day. They become scratchy and all I want to do is close them. I have found drops to be very helpful. But, sometimes they are like waterfalls when I’m walking into the wind on an especially chilly day. And I have more trouble now driving at night than I did when I was younger. This is most likely the result of my pupils becoming less responsive to light. These are minor changes for sure. But other changes we see (no pun intended) with age include cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma among other things. It’s very important to visit your eye doctor regularly so changes in vision can be monitored.

**Our Sense of Taste**

No, I don’t mean that you find it perfectly acceptable to wear argyle with your plaid. But have you noticed that your favorite dish just doesn’t taste as flavorful as it used to? It’s perfectly normal and most likely the result of losing some of the 9000 or so tastebuds you were born with. Some people make up for this by adding more sugar or salt to their food to enhance flavor. But best to use caution due to added calories or possible adverse blood pressure effects.

**What Was I Trying to Say?**

You’re deep in conversation with someone who shares a common interest. Suddenly you can’t recall the name of something that should easily come to you. No worries, it’s most likely age related. Between our brains shrinking somewhat with age and reduced blood flow, this is not uncommon. When this happens with me, I will start with the letter A in my head and work my way through the alphabet to see if I can come up with the elusive name. Somehow this works for me nearly all the time. But if large memory losses are occuring, it’s time to see your doctor.

**Walking and Chewing Gum at the Same Time**

Another common age-related change is less ability to multitask. Multitasking requires a lot from our brain: attention, working memory, ability to block distractions and maintain focus. It’s okay to concentrate on doing one thing at a time and doing well. When on the phone with a friend, give all of your attention to your conversation, not to trying to do laundry and dishes at the same time. You might just put dish soap in with the whites!

As stated, these are all normal changes with age. But it’s still a good idea to let your doctor know about them and pay attention to them, especially if anything comes on suddenly or worsens quickly. Wishing you many more birthdays!

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One year of past newsletters are posted on our website at http://www.kines.umich.edu/programs/physical-education/our-programs.
Wrist Exercises for Strength and Flexibility

Having strong wrists is important for everyday activities such as carrying groceries, opening jars and doors and typing. These simple exercises will help you develop strong and flexible wrists. If you have any wrist or lower arm injury, always consult with your doctor before starting a strengthening program. And never do any exercise to the point of pain or discomfort. Since there are no muscles in the actual wrist itself, you will be working on the muscles of the forearm.

**Wrist curls** can be done with no weight or light dumbbells. Extend arm over a surface with wrist facing up. Keep arm on surface while curling wrist upward. Repeat 8–10 times and then do on opposite hand. Repeat for both sides. You can then turn your wrist facing down and do the same repetitions.

**Ball squeezes** can be done with a tennis ball. Simply squeeze the ball in one hand with force for five seconds. Relax for a few seconds and repeat. Then do other hand. Repeat on both side for two sets.

**Finger extensions** are great for building grip endurance and strength. Place a rubber band around all four fingers and thumb. Spread all digits as far as you can against the rubber band. Repeat twice and then do other hand. Repeat on both hands for two sets. This exercise will be more difficult the further you have the band toward your fingertips.

To do the **wrist flexor stretch**, have arm on table with wrist hanging off edge, wrist facing down. Gently pull fingers back to feel a stretch and hold for five seconds. Shake hand out and repeat. Don’t forget the other side!

Keeping your arm on the table, now gently push fingers down so you feel a strength on top of the wrist for the **wrist extensor stretch**.

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Help Us Meet Our Goal (Again!)

You did it! You more than helped us reach our $5000 goal from November 1, 2013–October 31, 2014 by gifting just over $8000. Thank you so much for your support of this program!

Starting November 1 of this year, we will continue our campaign with the goal again to raise at least $5000 by October 31, 2015. If you give $50 or more, you will receive a hot and cold beverage tumbler with Lifetime Fitness printed on it. It includes a lid for hot drinks and a lid and straw for cold ones. Those who donate $25–$49 will receive a mini-backpack. The Lifetime Fitness program has been providing quality exercise instruction that’s safe, effective and fun for senior adults (although everyone is welcome) at Briarwood Mall for many years now. And while the program is free to participate, we do rely on donations to cover costs such as instructor wages and smaller operating expenses. Your donations are the only source of funding for Lifetime Fitness. Even as little as fifty cents per session helps us keep the program running. There is a drop-box for on the spot donations. Every little bit helps and is much appreciated!

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Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village, though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow. 

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year. 

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound’s the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake. 

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep. 

~Robert Frost
In the most recent survey we conducted with Lifetime Fitness participants, a few commented about not having recipes in this newsletter. It’s assumed the majority of people like having recipes; but this issue will not. Instead here are some fun Do It Yourself (DIY) projects you can do with food. Let’s get crafty...

**Dried Pineapple Flowers**

Wow! These look real and tasty. What a beautiful way to decorate a cake or cupcakes.

Using a sharp knife, cut the top and bottom off a whole fresh pineapple. Then carefully remove the rind. Using the pointy end of a vegetable peeler or small sharp knife, remove any remaining eyes or seeds. Now thinly slice the pineapple into almost translucent slices. Lay them individually on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Bake at 225 degrees for about 30 minutes, flip and bake another 30 minutes. Ovens vary so watch they don’t burn. You want to remove them from the oven when they have shrunken and are almost completely dried. Immediately put each in a muffin to cool. With the edges curled up along the tin, they will take on the shape of a flower. Have fun decorating and sharing with guests!

**Flowery Stationery**

You can use different leafy vegetables to make beautiful stamps on your cards. Try radicchio cut in half, or a bunch of greens tied together with sturdy stems like Romaine lettuce that are cut at the bottom. Or cut Brussels sprouts in half. After cutting, set cut side down on a paper towel for five minutes for drying. Then press the cut side onto a large stamp (color of your choice) and press onto paper. In between stamps, blot vegetable on paper towel. Everyone loves receiving cards with a personalized touch!

**Tuna Can Candle**

After you have your nice tuna sandwich, peel off label and wash can well. Snap wooden clothes pins next to each other on top of the can. Place a small candle inside. Can also be used as a small planter.

**Reusing Coffee Grounds**

Don’t throw those coffee grounds away! They can have many uses after you get your caffeine fix.

- Sprinkle the grounds around your outdoor plants to ward off destructive critters like slugs and ants. Adding them around hydrangeas will make the flowers turn blue.
- Put grounds in a small open container and put in the back of your refrigerator for a few weeks to absorb odors.
- Add the grounds to water and make naturally dyed Easter eggs.
- Coffee grounds make an excellent exfoliant. Put some on a wash cloth and rub away dead and itchy skin.
- Carrots and radishes love coffee grounds. Mix the grounds with the seeds before planting.
- Use a coffee-soil mix for cut flowers to extend their lives. Plus it smells good.
- Scour stainless steel pots and pans with grounds.
- Tenderize meat with a coffee ground and spice mix.
LIFETIME FITNESS
SERVING THE ANN ARBOR COMMUNITY

For years, the University of Michigan’s School of Kinesiology has sponsored Lifetime Fitness through its U-Move Fitness program.

Although tailored with the senior adult in mind, classes are open to all adults.

- Pregnant and post-partum women
- The beginner exerciser
- Parents who have just dropped their children off at school
- Friends wanting to spend time together

Classes meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays (Zumba day) and Fridays from 9:00–10:00 am in the Von Maur court of the Briarwood Mall located at the corner of State Street and Eisenhower Parkway in Ann Arbor. Remember: When Ann Arbor Public Schools are closed due to bad weather, Lifetime Fitness is canceled.

Classes are FREE; but please check in with the instructor if you are coming for the first time to complete a registration form. Just come as you are and enjoy a carefully structured class that includes a warm-up, pre-aerobic stretch, sitting and standing aerobics, strength exercises, a cool down and final stretch.

U-Move Fitness takes great pride in proving this invaluable community service. While there is no charge for classes, your contributions help offset the cost of instructor training and wages, sound equipment, music, and other equipment. Your donations also qualify for state and federal tax credits.

A donation form is below for your convenience. Please send to:

U-Move Fitness
401 Washtenaw Avenue
3064 Central Campus Recreation Building
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2214

Or if you prefer, you may use the drop box at class for on-the-spot donations.

Thank you to the following for their recent donations:

Susan Irwin, Ellise Tseng, Fumkio Chung, Lois Deskins, Carole Starnes, Carolyn Schultz, Carolyn Bartle, Helen Snuverink, Julie Truax, Janet Spencer, Melissa Hubbard, Marilyn Trytten, Betty Johnston, Laurie Wicks, Mary Kellermann

To support the continued excellence of Lifetime Fitness, I/we pledge the sum of

$25 (Silver Level)   $50 (Gold Level)   $100   $150   $250   $500   Other $________

Method of donation (circle one)

Check   Credit Card

Please make checks payable to University of Michigan

Please charge my gift to (circle one): Visa   MasterCard   Discover   American Express

Account # _____________________ Expiration Date _____________________

Please print name as appears on card __________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

City, State, Zip: ____________________________