The Effects of the Aging Process
Objectives

• Physical, behavioral and emotional changes associated with aging
• Understand age-related versus disease-related changes
• Diseases that may occur
• Healthy aging
• Red Flags – changes in an older relative that may require assistance from family member and professionals
Aging = Changes

**True or False: Chronological age is the most important determinant of age.**

- Aging is an inevitable stage of life
- Aging is a gradual, highly individual process and the effects of aging differs widely
- The challenge for older adults is accepting and adjusting to changes
- Disease and aging are two different things – the symptoms of disease should not be confused with aging.
Common Physiological Changes

**True or False:** Older people need less sleep.

Physiological Changes:

- Change in appearance: skin, hair and nails
- Reduced ability to perspire
- Reduced blood flow
- Shortness of breath and fatigue
- Decreased ability to take in oxygen
- Some loss of muscle tone and strength
- Constipation and bladder incontinence
Common Physiological Changes (con’t)

Physiological Changes:
• Bone density reduction
• Arthritis
• Slower reflexes
• Change in sleep patterns
• Produce less hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, and salvia
• More susceptible to drug toxicity
• In spite of physical loss and difficulties, most older people adjust quite well and are able to compensate for their losses.
True or false: An older person who has a hearing problem will know it.

• Our senses play a key role in our ability to gather information and participate in social interactions.

• Many older persons accept sensory deficits as an “inevitable” part of aging. Treatment or sensory aides could restore quality of life, sense of independence and participation in relationships and activities.
Common Sensory Changes (con’t)

• Common sensory changes:
  – Vision
  – Hearing
  – Taste and smell
  – Skin sensitivity

• Older persons and their caregivers should be encouraged to check for and address sensory deficits
Cognitive Changes

**True or false: Memory loss is part of the aging process.**

- Brain size decreases, but for most, intelligence remains constant
- Older individuals are capable of learning new skills but it may take more time and practice
- Many things other than aging can cause memory problems – including stress, depression, dementia (severe problems with memory and thinking, such as Alzheimer's disease), side effects of drugs, strokes, head injury and alcoholism
Diseases and Health Challenges

**True or false: Poor health in later life is inevitable.**

- Cancer
- Kidney and Bladder Problems
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Blood vessel disease
- Lung disease
- Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia

- Depression
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Adult onset diabetes
- Prostate disease
- Parkinson’s disease
Emotional and Behavioral Changes

True or False: Personality changes as people age.

Changes and Stress:
• Aging is a process of adjusting to continual changes including:
  – Health changes
  – Sensory changes including vision, hearing and other senses
  – Mobility restrictions
  – Memory
  – Relocation or housing changes
Emotional and Behavioral Changes (con’t)

• Aging is a process of adjusting to continual changes including:
  – Caregiving for spouse or another person
  – Retirement
  – Death of spouse, friends other family members
  – Income
  – Reliance on others

• When stressors multiply, people are more vulnerable to mental health problems
Attitude and Successful Aging

• Successful aging depends on an older adult’s attitude and ability to compensate for changes
• Healthy lifestyle
• Productivity and employment
• Having a passion/strong interest
• Coping well and having an optimistic outlook
• Staying involved in activities and social engagement
Red Flags

- Unjustified fear
- Multiple complaints
- Unreasonable excuses
- Burdensome guilt/shame
- Unwarranted suspicion
- Inability to concentrate

- Unwillingness to talk
- Neglect of self-care
- Tearfulness
- Neglect of duties
- Agitation or irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness
Red Flags (con’t)

- Unexplained injuries
- Stopping usual routines
- Refusal to have visitors
- Mood swings
- Multiple medications
- Recent losses

- Isolation or withdrawal
- Loss of hearing or vision
- Loss of bladder control
- Chronic pain
- Change in appetite
- Memory impairment
WorkLife4You Resources
WorkLife4You web site www.WorkLife4You.com

- Adult Care & Aging Web Service
  - Caregiving Issues Library
- Audio Tips and Podcasts
  Adult Care Overview, The Sandwich Generation, Caregiving Elderly Parents
- Video Tips
  Cognitive Test for Alzheimer’s Disease, Diagnosing Alzheimer’s Disease
- Medical Animations
  Alzheimer’s Disease
- HTML Articles
- Related Web Sites

- On Demand Webinars
  Adult Care Overview, Caring Financially for Your Older Parents, Caring for a Loved One with Alzheimer’s Disease, Caring for Adult Loved Ones: Legal/Financial Issues, Communicating with Your Older Loved One, The Sandwich Generation

- WorkLife4You Guides
  Health Care, Legal and Financial Issues for Caregivers; Home Safety for Adult Loved Ones; Encouraging Healthy Habits in Adult Loved Ones; Senior Services; Emergency Preparedness for Caregivers; What You Need to Know About Becoming a Caregiver; Day-to-Day Caregiving; Caring for a Loved One from Afar
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