

Partners in Quality Care

- February 2012 -

In-Home Aides Partners in Quality Care is a monthly newsletter published for member agencies.

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What You Will Learn:

- ♥ The normal aging process and its effects
- ♥ Assisting older clients to cope with aging changes
- ♥ Tips on providing care for older adults

Happy Valentines Day!



Working with Older Adults - Did you know that the 2010 census shows the 65 and older population is growing faster than the total U.S. population- this newsletter will cover information on aging and the changes that occur with aging. Learning about the aging process can help you understand the unique care needs of working with older adults.

As we get older, our bodies change in the following ways:

- **Senses-** we cannot: smell as well, taste as well (lots of food tastes the same), feel as much with our skin, see as well (takes eyes longer to adjust to lighting, harder to see at night), and hear as well (may have trouble hearing high sounds)
- **The way we look -** nails get thicker and shorter, body gets shorter, eyes sink in more
- **Skin -** bruises easily, gets age spots and wrinkles, looks clear, pale and thin
- **Hair -** falls out, turns gray
- **Weight-** men often gain weight until age 50 and then lose it, women often gain weight until age 70, and then lose it
- **Body systems -** the heart does not work as well, we get tired faster, it takes us longer to heal or get better after being sick, longer to react and think; we have more trouble digesting food, keeping our balance and sleeping
- **Bones-** get weaker, they break more easily
- **Muscles-** get weaker

Tip- People do not age at the same rate or in the same way. Certain factors contribute to this- physical (genetics, relatives), psychological (stressors throughout the life), lifestyle (influence of drugs, nutrition, smoking), environmental (occupation, residence), social (economics or how much money the person has, education level).

Society's definition of an older adult is any person older than 65 years old.

Below are Common Changes for each body system and the In-Home Aide's role in assisting elderly client's to Manage Changes of Aging: (always check first with your supervisor and the client's plan of care!)

Circulatory System:

As people age, the flow of blood changes.

The heart gets weaker and doesn't work as well.
Tubes that carry blood get harder and narrower. This slows the flow of blood.

Because of these changes, older people often:

Feel cold, especially in their hands and feet
Have a fast heartbeat when they get upset
Are short of breath after doing things

To help with blood flow, ask the client to:

Avoid crossing their legs and wearing tight clothes
Avoid things that upset them
Move around
Put their legs up
Soak their feet in warm water, or take a warm bath

If the client is cold, ask them to:

Dress in layers
Eat and drink warm things
Turn up the heat, or use an extra blanket. But do **not** offer hot water bottles or heating pads.

To help with shortness of breath encourage your client to:

Take their time doing activities and rest every so often
And remember to report changes to your supervisor

Digestive System:

As people age, their eating and digestion change.

They have fewer taste buds.
They feel less thirsty.
They may lose teeth or have dentures that don't fit well. This makes it hard to eat some foods.
They have less saliva.
Food stays in the stomach longer.
The muscles of the large bowel do not work as well.
They feel less of an urge to empty their bowel.

Because of these changes, older people often:

Have a dry mouth
Have gas, bloating, or stomach pain
Have hard bowel movements
Lose teeth

If the client does not want to eat:

Offer them snacks.
Make food look better and have more flavor.

If the client does not want to drink, or has hard bowel movements:

Offer them small amounts of fluids often.

To help with dry mouth:

Suggest the client drink before taking pills.

Respiratory

As people age, their breathing changes.

They don't breathe out carbon dioxide and take in oxygen as well as before.
Their breathing tubes can get clogged with mucus.

Because of these changes, elders often:

Have trouble breathing when they move around.
Cough more and may cough up mucus.

To help with shortness of breath encourage your clients to:

Take their time doing activities.
To rest every so often and take slow, deep breaths.
And be sure your supervisor knows if your client is changing in case medical attention is needed

Everything slows down with age,
except the time it takes cake and
ice cream to reach your hips.
~Attributed to John Wagner



To keep teeth healthy:

Offer mouth care often.

If the client has trouble digesting, ask them to:

- Eat 6 to 8 small meals each day, if their care plan says to
- Eat foods that are high in fiber, if their care plan says to
- Avoid foods that are spicy or could cause gas
- Eat slowly and chew well
- Sit up for 30 minutes after eating
- Take plenty of time to empty their bowels

Nervous System

As people age, their brain and nerves change.

- Nerve cells die.
- The senses don't work as well.

Because of these changes, older people often have trouble:

- Coping with change
- Falling asleep
- Getting used to changes in light
- Going up and down stairs
- Keeping their balance
- Learning and recalling new things
- Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling things

If the client forgets things easily:

- Ask them to write things down.
- Give them clues to help them remember.
- Give them puzzles and mental challenges for practice.

If the client loses their balance easily:

- Ask them to use handrails, if possible.
- Ask them to change position slowly. Count to 10 after they get up, then assist them to walk.
- Give them plenty of time to get around.

If the client has trouble getting to sleep:

- Ask them to move around during the day.
- Offer them a back rub and warm milk before bed, if possible.
- Ask them to avoid coffee, tea, chocolate, and alcohol before bed.

If a client has trouble seeing:

- Ask them to wait for their eyes to get used to changes in light.
- Make sure they have plenty of light and a clear path.
- Do **not** move things around in their room.
- Ask them to get their eyes checked and wear their glasses.
- Assist them to find their way, if needed.

If a client has trouble hearing:

- Speak clearly.
- Get close to them when you talk.
- Ask them to get their ears checked.
- Remind them to wear their hearing aid (if they have one).

Skeletomuscular System

As people age, their muscles, bones, and joints change.

- The spine gets shorter. The upper spine may become curved. The head may bend forward.
- Bones lose calcium and get weaker.
- Muscles get weaker and less stretchy.
- Joints get stiff, especially after sleep or rest.

Because of these changes, elders often:

- Break bones easily.
- Feel joint and muscle pain.
- Get tired easily.
- Have trouble taking off and putting on lids and lifting heavy cups.
- Need more time to do things.

Ask the client to:

- Move their joints and muscles, if their care plan says to.
- Eat foods and drinks with calcium, such as milk products, if their care plan says to.
- Rest and take their time doing activities.
- Try using plastic cups with handles. Fill the cups only half full.

Make sure the client:

- Can reach the things they use often.
- Has a clear path, plenty of light, strong furniture.



Resources- PHI national- Providing Personal Care Services to Elders and People with Disabilities, PHI, 2009; A More Empathetic You curriculum module- Win a Step Up- DHHS, HCPR section, 2000.



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For more information on AHHC's endorsed risk management and insurance program visit: <http://www.homeandhospicecare.org/insurance/home.html>

In-home aide newsletter- February 2012
POST-TEST Working with Older Adults (Aging)

Name: _____

1. The 2010 Census shows the 65 and older population is growing faster than the total U.S. population. (check true or false)

True

False

2. As we get older our bodies change in the following ways: (check the correct answer or answers)

- a. Our smell, taste, sense of feel, eyes, and hearing
- b. The way we look- our nails, body, eyes
- c. Our skin and hair
- d. Weight changes
- e. Body systems such as our heart, digestion, healing time
- f. All of the above

3. People age at the same rate and in the same way (check true or false)

True

False

4. The following factors contribute to aging: (check the correct answer or answers)

- a. physical
- b. psychological
- c. lifestyle
- d. environmental
- e. social
- f. All of the above

5. Because of changes in the circulatory system, older people often feel cold especially in their hands and feet (check true or false)

True

False

6. If your client is cold you could offer them a hot water bottle or heating pad (check true or false)

True

False

7. Because of changes in digestion older people often have a _____ mouth and may have other digestive issues such as _____ bowel movements (fill in the blanks)

8. As people age, their breathing changes, ways that the aide can help the client with this are: (check the correct answer or answers):

- a. Encourage your client to take their time doing activities
- b. Encourage your client to rest every so often and take slow, deep breaths
- c. Notify your supervisor if your client is changing in case medical attention is needed
- d. a and b
- e. a, b, and c

9. If the client has trouble with digestion, one suggestion you could give would be to ask the client to eat slowly and chew well (check true or false)

True

False

10. Because of the changes with aging and the nervous system, older people often have trouble with: (check the correct answer or answers):

- a. Coping with change
- b. Falling asleep
- c. Getting used to changes in light
- d. Going up and down stairs
- e. Keeping their balance
- f. All of the above

Bonus- Think about what you have learned about how a person ages and how it will affect your everyday work with your elderly clients and write down your responses:
