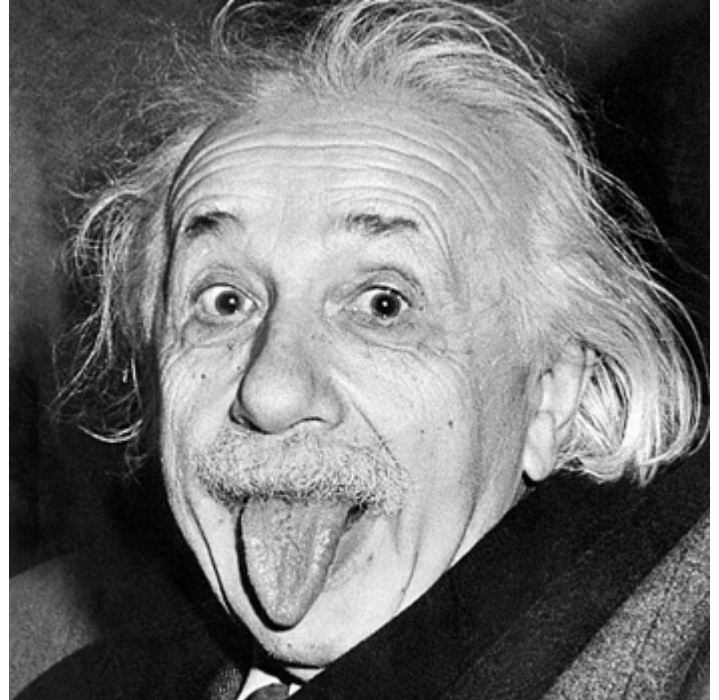


Aging Carefully: 9 Things That Happen to Your Body (Some Aren't So Bad!)

By Scott LaFee | August 31, 2015


TV commercials and certain actresses to the contrary, everybody gets old. Or at least, that's the goal. The trick is to age well, which isn't so much a mystery as a set of well-reasoned and reasonable rules and habits for living a healthy, long life.

So put on your reading glasses (the old peepers are among the first things to go) and peruse the items below. Old age is a mix of caused effects, some good and some, well, not-so-good. The last one, though, should make you smile, if you aren't already.



- You sweat less. Well, to be precise, you sweat differently, particularly if you're a woman. Part of the change is related to menopause, i.e. hot flashes, but researchers have found that sweat glands (especially under the arms) shrink and become less sensitive as we age, which translates into reduced perspiration production.
- You're less buff. Muscle mass in both men and women begins to decline as early as one's 30s, replaced by – gasp! – flab. By age 75, the average person's fat content is twice that of their youth.
- Your teeth are less sensitive – and not just because you might have fewer of them. The reason is that over time more dentin – the hard inner tissue – is built up between the outer enamel of a tooth and its central nerve. The added insulation diminishes sensitivity. The bad news, though, is that our gums recede over time, exposing roots a different way.
- Your brain is smaller. As you get older, certain parts of the brain shrink, most notably the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, both important to learning, memory, planning and other complex mental activities. It's been estimated that the brain begins losing neurons

at a rate of 50,000 per day after age 30 – more if you listen to certain politicians. But not to fret. For one thing, the average human brain contains more than 100 billion neurons and research has shown that aging brains learn quite well how to adapt. That wizened brain of yours is also likely to be wise beyond its years.

- You catch fewer colds. This is the payoff for all those years of sneezing, coughing and runny noses as a kid. By the time you reach middle age, you've been exposed to a diverse host of viruses and have built up a pretty expansive immune response. Been there, caught that.
- You get fewer migraines (if you're a woman). If hot flashes are the "personal summer bummer" of menopause, the upside is fewer migraines. Research suggests that 67 percent of female migraine sufferers get permanent relief after menopause due to changes in hormone levels.
- You have less taste. Maybe not in things like clothes (though that might be a matter of debate), but where it literally counts. By age 60, most people have lost half of their taste buds, which research has found is a big reason why older people often compensate by eating more foods high in tasty sugar, salt and fat.
- You don't hear so well, either. Hearing loss can begin as early as one's 20s, but tends to be gradual and not really noticeable until your 50s. One in every three adults experiences hearing loss by age 65. By age 75, it's one in two.
- You get happier. It seems counter-intuitive, but [studies show older folks become more content with time](#) . It's a U-shaped curve. As kids, we generally feel quite good about life, but that sense of well-being diminishes with passing years. Middle age is the nadir, that proverbial time of crisis. But things look up after that.

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