

## BUSTLE

# 11 Super Common Myths About Aging That Everyone Should Dismiss

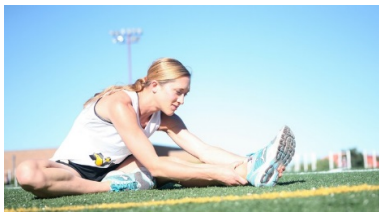
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When it comes to aging, most of us have fear and uneasiness when it comes to getting older. However, there are a ton of myths surrounding aging that just aren't true, and as it turns out, the reality isn't as bad as it seems. Sure, things change when you reach a certain age, but that doesn't mean you are going to be a cranky old woman stuck in a rocking chair covered in wrinkles reminiscing about when life was better.

"A widespread myth about aging, especially prevalent in the United States, needs a serious reality check — the one that says older people are slow, ignorant and not interested in life," says psychologist Dr. Noelle Nelson, author of *Happy Healthy...Dead: Why What You Think You Know About Aging Is Wrong and How To Get It Right*, over email. "The stereotype that as we age we suddenly become dim-witted, have no desire to learn new things, and aren't interest in the world is persistent in our culture, but it's a lie."

To help clarify fact from fiction when it comes to getting older, I consulted with a few aging experts to bust those super common myths about aging that no one should believe.

### 1. You'll Permanently Lose Your Muscle & Flexibility



Just because you're getting older doesn't mean you'll end up weak. "The truth is that the more you exercise, the stronger your muscles and bones become," says anti-aging physician Dr. Christopher Calapai D.O. over email. "Muscles have memory and ligaments remain loose and flexible even as you age, provided you exercise. Exercising

30 minutes a day and incorporating light weight makes a huge difference regardless of when you begin."

## 2. You'll Lose Your Sex Drive



The spark doesn't have to die as you age. "Exercise and mindset go hand in hand when it comes to aging and keeping the sexual fires and desires burning," says Calapai. "The fact is older people should have a healthy sex life. Thinking one is too old for sex only perpetuates a lack of desire for sex."

## 3. You'll Become Senile



Taking care of yourself mentally and physically can help preserve your brain to keep your cognitive functioning its best, and this includes eating a healthy diet. "Tufts University scientists who specifically study the aging brain found that mental issues were many times linked to vitamin deficiencies," says Calapai. "A lack of folate or B12 can cause depression, lack of focus, forgetfulness, and irritability. Eating dark leafy greens, asparagus, raspberries, and papaya is a great source of folate. "

## 4. Your Genes Will Dictate How You Age



Just because your parents or grandparents aged one way doesn't mean you will too. Although your genetics do play a role, studies show that your habits matter just as much. "How you live your life, what you consume, and most importantly how you think has more of an impact than genes," says Calapai. "Your genes can change based on diet, exercise, meditation, and exposure to chemicals. Your genetic jackpot is yours to create."

## 5. You'll Lose Your Eye Sight



"Near or farsightedness is common with aging, but it doesn't have to escalate into macular degeneration or blindness," says Calapai. "There are things that one can do to protect their vision." Protect your eyes from sunlight with hats, visors, and sunglasses, avoid smoking, and be sure to eat a healthy diet.

## 6. You'll Become Cranky



likely to show signs of Alzheimer's themselves."

"Sure, there are older people who complain about things — but so do a lot of younger people," says Nelson. "How we think about aging has a big impact on how we live are later years. What everyone should know is that if you have a negative attitude about aging, guess what? That attitude will be self-fulfilling. Recent research shows that people who thought of the elderly in negative terms were more

## 7. You'll Lose Your Appetite And Eat Like A Bird



The thought of no longer being able to enjoy your favorite meal sounds scary, but luckily, it's not true. When you reach old age, you are generally less active, which just means you need to consume fewer calories. "Seniors who eat meals with family and friends more frequently than alone maintain their appetites," says Calapai. "Skipping meals only weakens appetite, increases hunger, and throws blood sugar levels out of whack."

## 8. You'll Get Osteoporosis



Not everyone is doomed to weak and brittle bones. According to a study from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the prevalence of osteoporosis was estimated at 4 percent in women 50 to 59 years of age compared to 44 percent in women 80 years of age and older. To decrease your chances of osteoporosis, make sure you regularly exercise and consume enough calcium and vitamin D.

## 9. You Lose Interest In Everything



Getting older doesn't mean you can't learn new things or continue your hobbies you have loved since childhood. "Adult schools are packed with older folks wanting to learn," says Nelson. "Travel, a great way to explore and learn, has always been a desire by many older people and the trend is continuing."

## 10. Wrinkles Are The Problem



"They're only a sign of the problem," says dermatologist **Dr. Ava Shamban** over email. "The actual causes are changes in bone fat and collagen." Wrinkles can be prevented with proper skin care, including wearing sunscreen, eating foods high in antioxidants that boost collagen production, and sleeping on your back.

## 11. It's Too Late To Change Anything



"Early signs of aging will not go away by themselves," says Shamban. "Intervention is required." It's never too late to begin exercising, quitting smoking, or taking on healthy habits. Multiple studies show that habits such as eating well can lengthen telomeres, the thread-like structures on the end of our DNA strands that contain all our genetic data — and also shorten as we age.

The more healthy habits you take on, the better you will protect yourself against any unwanted symptoms of aging — but there's no need to dread the process!

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