

Chapter 2: The Aging Experience

Multiple Choice

Identify the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

- ___ 1. The fastest growing segment of the population in the United States is
 - a. Teenagers
 - b. Babies
 - c. People older than 85 years of age
 - d. None of the above

- ___ 2. Mr. Smith, an 88-year-old retired school principal, lives alone in his home. His neighbors have never been in his home but believe it must be dark, dirty, smelly, and without modern conveniences. They instruct the children to stay away from the house and Mr. Smith because he is a “crazy old man.” This is an example of
 - a. Racism
 - b. Sexism
 - c. Ageism
 - d. Patriotism

- ___ 3. Select the response that is *not* an example of ageism:
 - a. Getting old is a hopeless downward spiral to death
 - b. As people get older, they become very self-centered
 - c. Older people maintain unique and individual characteristics
 - d. Older people become very rigid and are unable to learn new things

- ___ 4. Normal physiological aging is
 - a. A predictable and uniform process
 - b. Reflective of individual diversity
 - c. Accompanied by extreme mood swings and predictable depression
 - d. Primarily related to chronic disease processes

- ___ 5. How individuals age does *not* depend on their
 - a. Life experiences
 - b. Financial resources
 - c. Stress management style
 - d. Social support system

- ___ 6. The normal aging process is accompanied by
 - a. Potential problems in functional ability
 - b. Chronic disease processes
 - c. Regression from previous social activities
 - d. A characteristic depression related to multiple losses

- ___ 7. The leading cause of death in older adults is
 - a. Stroke
 - b. Heart disorders
 - c. Cancer
 - d. Pneumonia

- ___ 8. All of the following are psychological theories of aging *except*
 - a. Subcultural theory
 - b. Wear-and-tear theory

- c. Developmental tasks theory
 - d. Continuity theory
- _____ 9. According to Eric Erikson's eight stages of life theory, the task of old age is
- a. Industry vs. Inferiority
 - b. Identity vs. Role Confusion
 - c. Ego integrity vs. Despair
 - d. Generativist vs. Stagnation
- _____ 10. Physiological theories of aging focus on all of the following *except*
- a. Genetics
 - b. Nutrition
 - c. Wear and tear of the body
 - d. Personality
- _____ 11. Normal aging of the cardiovascular system includes
- a. Strengthened heart contractions
 - b. Decreased cardiac output
 - c. Flaccid and thinned heart valves
 - d. Dilation of blood vessels
- _____ 12. An older adult's ability to function is
- a. The ability to have quality of life
 - b. The ability to perform ADLs, perform instrumental ADLs, and have quality of life
 - c. The ability to drive a car
 - d. The ability to work, drive, shop, and exercise as before
- _____ 13. Increased residual lung volume with aging is the result of all of the following *except*
- a. Kyphosis
 - b. Decreased elastic recoil
 - c. Decrease in the number of functioning alveoli
 - d. Decreased efficiency of gas exchange in the alveoli
- _____ 14. One of the best ways for the nurse to promote normal respiratory function with older adults is to
- a. Encourage daily walks
 - b. Teach the use of inhalers in case of respiratory emergencies
 - c. Discourage strenuous lifting and physical activity
 - d. Encourage frequent naps and rest periods
- _____ 15. Normal age-related changes affecting the respiratory status of older adults are gradual. Some of these changes include
- a. Weakened abdominal muscles
 - b. Increased rigidity of the rib cage
 - c. Increased thickness of the alveolus capillary membrane
 - d. All of the above
- _____ 16. Common complications of inactivity in older adults include all of the following *except*
- a. Decreased range of motion of the joint
 - b. Decreased bone mass
 - c. Decreased muscle mass
 - d. Decreased energy
- _____ 17. Aging changes of the skin affect an older adult's

- a. Temperature regulation
 - b. Joint mobility
 - c. Ability to ambulate
 - d. Clothing style choices
- _____ 18. One of the most effective ways to minimize the aging changes of the skin is to
- a. Avoid excessive sun exposure
 - b. Use rose milk lotion on the skin every day
 - c. Use a vitamin E–fortified lotion every day
 - d. Wash the skin daily with soap
- _____ 19. Musculoskeletal changes in an older adult can be reversed or slowed by
- a. An exercise program
 - b. Calcium supplements
 - c. A diet rich in carbohydrates
 - d. Both A and B
- _____ 20. What is the best advice for an older person who complains of never being hungry?
- a. Avoid eating roughage and drinking large amounts of fluid
 - b. Force yourself to eat at least three meals a day
 - c. Try eating six small meals throughout the day
 - d. As people get older, they may need to eat only one meal a day
- _____ 21. Which body system is most highly influenced by previous life patterns and environmental conditions?
- a. Circulatory
 - b. Integumentary
 - c. Respiratory
 - d. Gastrointestinal
- _____ 22. Enlargement of the prostate gland in older men
- a. Indicates the presence of cancer
 - b. Decreases the incidence of urinary incontinence for older men
 - c. Is a normal aging change
 - d. Is related to a high incidence of impotence for older men
- _____ 23. Incontinence is a problem for many older women. The normal aging change that contributes to stress incontinence for older women is
- a. Decreased renal blood flow
 - b. Decreased bladder capacity
 - c. Reduced glomerular filtration rate
 - d. Loss of mass and strength of perineal muscles
- _____ 24. Painful intercourse and vaginal infections can be associated with
- a. Decreased vaginal secretions
 - b. Urinary incontinence
 - c. Loss of pubic hair
 - d. Decrease in perineal muscle mass
- _____ 25. The sleep pattern change that is most stressful to older adults is
- a. Frequent waking
 - b. Shorter sleeping time at night
 - c. Inability to nap during the day
 - d. Feeling of being less rested after sleeping all night

- _____ 26. The most common gastrointestinal problems for older adults are
- Indigestion, diarrhea, and anorexia
 - Constipation, bulimia, and indigestion
 - Indigestion, constipation, and anorexia
 - Flatulence, diarrhea, and intestinal cramps
- _____ 27. Older adults adapt to their slowed response time by
- Increasing accuracy of the response
 - Avoiding situations that require a quick response
 - Giving up activities such as driving
 - Using ambulation aids to decrease their chance of falling
- _____ 28. Decreased tearing of the eyes increases the incidence of
- Cataract formation
 - Corneal abrasions
 - Glaucoma
 - Eye infections
- _____ 29. Which of the following is the characteristic aging change in hearing for older adults?
- Loss of high-frequency tones
 - Loss of high-frequency and low-frequency tones
 - Loss of low-frequency tones
 - Generalized loss of all frequencies
- _____ 30. To aid in hearing for an older adult, the nurse should
- Speak slowly with an increased pitch
 - Speak slowly in a normal tone
 - Speak loudly
 - Mouth words slowly so that the older adult can read lips
- _____ 31. The preferred colors to use for signs, curb markings, and stair edging for older adults are
- Blue and yellow
 - Blue and green
 - Yellow and red
 - Red and green
- _____ 32. Which of the following changes in the aging eye increases risk of falling?
- Decreased dark and light accommodation
 - Yellowing of the lens
 - Decreased tearing
 - Increased sensitivity to glare
- _____ 33. Teresa Martinez, 78 years old, reports that she is having difficulty hearing her TV and needs to turn the volume up. She has been having crackling sounds in her ears. When the physician examines her ears, both are impacted with cerumen. Why is the incidence of cerumen impaction increased for older adults?
- Increased keratin in cerumen
 - Increased production of cerumen
 - Older adults are less likely to be in the habit of using cotton-tipped applicators to clean out their ears
 - Decreased bathing because of skin dryness, so ears do not get cleaned as often

- ___ 34. Mr. Jones, 84 years old, reports to the nurse that he is concerned about something “being wrong” with him. He reports a decreased reaction time while driving and some dizziness when getting out of his car. These symptoms are
- Indicative of senile dementia
 - Part of the normal aging process
 - Secondary to diet
 - Indicative of decreased mental capabilities
- ___ 35. Activities of daily living (ADLs) include all of the following *except*
- Eating
 - Cooking
 - Dressing
 - Moving
- ___ 36. Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) include all of the following *except*
- Cleaning
 - Managing finances
 - Toileting
 - Taking medications
- ___ 37. Signs of wear and tear on the body as the result of aging include all of the following *except*
- Replaced knees
 - Use of a walker
 - Slow gait
 - Chronic diseases
- ___ 38. When first interviewing an elderly patient, a nurse should include questions about
- Nutrition
 - Family history
 - Chronic diseases
 - All of the above

True/False

Indicate whether the statement is true or false.

- ___ 1. It is common for an older adult to feel colder and have decreased diaphoresis, even with an elevated body temperature.
- ___ 2. Older adults are at a greater risk for infection because of decreased skin elasticity and age-related skin dryness.
- ___ 3. The increase in systolic and diastolic pressures in an older adult may be caused by increased rigidity of the vascular walls.
- ___ 4. Blood volume is increased secondary to age-related increase in total body water.
- ___ 5. Bone marrow production is decreased, causing a slight decrease in hematocrit and hemoglobin levels of red blood cells (RBCs).
- ___ 6. Respiratory functioning shows more age-related changes than circulatory functioning.

- _____ 7. Osteoporosis may cause a stooped posture, decreasing active lung space, which contributes to decreased air flow.

- _____ 8. According to the genetic theory of aging, life span is predetermined, but persons with a family history of early death can still increase the chances of prolonging life or improving their quality of life with good nutrition, exercise, and stress control.

Chapter 2: The Aging Experience

Answer Section

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. ANS: C

The size of this age group is expected to double between 2000 and 2040. More people celebrate their 85th birthday than babies are born daily.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Aging demographics

2. ANS: C

Ageism is systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

3. ANS: C

All older people are unique individuals. The process of aging does not make everyone behave or act the same. Responses A, B, and D all are examples of ageism and are untrue.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Psychology

4. ANS: B

Although aging is a universal experience, each individual older person represents a different pattern of aging. Response A is not a good answer because it implies that the aging experience of every older person is the same. Responses C and D do not address normal aging. Older adults may experience depression and chronic diseases, but these are not normal aging experiences.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

5. ANS: B

Although money can purchase resources and services to support older people as they age, it is a less significant variable than responses A, C, and D. How a person ages depends on his or her life experiences, stress management style, and social support system.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

6. ANS: A

Changes in functional ability, or the ability of the older adult to perform activities of daily living, can be influenced by normal aging changes. Response B is incorrect. Many older adults have chronic disease processes, but disease processes are not a normal consequence of aging. Aging is often viewed as a series of losses. The process is gradual, and older adults generally adapt well, maintain their social activities, and are not generally depressed by the aging process. Responses C and D are incorrect.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

7. ANS: C

Cancer is now the leading cause of death among older adults. Cardiovascular diseases (referred to in responses A and B) used to be the leading cause of death among older adults, but older people have learned to take better care of themselves (e.g., diet, exercise). Response D is also incorrect, although pneumonia is a serious concern in older adults.

PTS: 1

KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

8. ANS: B

Psychological theories of aging stress developmental tasks (Erikson's eight stages of life theory); the fact that older people may form a subculture that has its own cultural norms, standards, beliefs, and expectations that make them different from other groups; and the idea of continuity or, in other words, that one's personality, characteristics, likes, and dislikes will continue in old age—maybe more so. Response B refers to a physiological theory of aging.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

9. ANS: C

The task for old age, according to Erikson, is Integrity vs. Despair. If older adults can find meaning in the life they have lived and are living, they will have the ego integrity to adjust to the process of aging. Responses A and B are incorrect; those are the tasks of people roughly aged 6 through their 20s; response D is also incorrect; this is the task of adulthood, until age 55 to 65.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

10. ANS: D

One physiological theory of aging focuses on genetics, stating that people are born with a genetic program that predetermines life span. Another focuses on a person's nutrition during his or her life span, and yet another focuses on the fact that all fine-tuned machinery—and that includes body parts—wear out or become less effective as they are repeatedly used. Response D—personality—is incorrect because it does not relate directly to a physiological factor.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

11. ANS: B

Cardiac output is decreased as a result of the slowed heart rate and weaker cardiac contractions. This is not usually a noticeable problem unless older persons are exposed to stressors that exceed their reserves. Responses A, C, and D are incorrect. The aging heart is slower and weaker, the valves become thickened and more rigid, and blood vessels thicken and become less elastic.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Cardiovascular

12. ANS: B

The definition of function is the ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental ADLs, taking into consideration quality of life. The level of functioning may not be as it was, however, when the person was younger (response D).

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Aging

13. ANS: D

All of the responses are normal aging changes, but response D affects the efficiency of oxygen availability.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Respiratory

14. ANS: A

Exercise and activity are necessary to promote respiratory health. Response B is not a usual intervention for promoting respiratory health for older adults. Responses C and D are interventions that discourage activity.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Respiratory

15. ANS: D

In the normal aging process, abdominal muscles weaken, decreasing inspiratory and expiratory efforts; the rib cage becomes rigid because of calcification of cartilage; and the alveolus capillary membranes thicken, decreasing the surface area for gas exchange.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Respiratory

16. ANS: D
Inactivity has a negative effect on the musculoskeletal system; responses A, B, and C are incorrect. Exercise would increase an older adult's energy level, but inactivity does not cause decreased energy.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Musculoskeletal
17. ANS: A
The decrease in sweat production and loss of the insulating fat layer underlying the skin makes an older adult prone to hyperthermia and hypothermia. Responses B and C are related to age-related musculoskeletal changes. Response D is not the best answer. Older adults may find that because of changes in their muscle mass and fat distribution, their clothing fits differently. Some older adults who are self-conscious of age spots on their arms may choose not to wear short-sleeved or sleeveless shirts.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Integumentary
18. ANS: A
Sun exposure intensifies the normal aging changes and increases an older adult's risk of developing skin cancer. Responses B, C, and D all are personal choices for skin care. It is important to keep the skin clean and moist to maintain its body protection function; however, none of these practices alone affects the integrity of the aging skin to the extent that avoiding sun exposure does.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Integumentary
19. ANS: D
Exercise assists in increasing endurance and increasing muscle strength, which affects functional ability. Calcium supplements help prevent porous, brittle bones that are susceptible to fractures; this assists in functional ability. Response C is incorrect because a diet rich in carbohydrates would cause weight gain, placing greater strain on joints and bones.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Implementation | Patient Care Area: Musculoskeletal
20. ANS: C
Slowed gastric emptying may cause an older person to have feelings of fullness and a lack of appetite. Eating smaller, more frequent meals may decrease this discomfort. Responses A, B, and D are not sound advice for an older person. Roughage and fluid are important to promote bowel function. Forcing oneself to eat or eating only one meal a day is not good nutritional practice.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Implementation | Patient Care Area: Nutrition
21. ANS: B
Exposure to sun, earlier health practices regarding diet, grooming, physical activity, genetic factors, and biochemical and environmental factors affect the integumentary system.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Integumentary
22. ANS: C
Benign enlargement of the prostate is a normal aging change. Responses A, B, and D are incorrect. Prostate enlargement is not always related to the presence of cancer. Enlargement of the prostate can cause urethral obstruction and is the primary cause of overflow incontinence and urinary dribbling. Prostate enlargement is not related to impotence.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Genitourinary
23. ANS: D
Stress incontinence, or loss of urine when intra-abdominal pressure is increased, can be increased with weak pelvic floor muscles. Responses A, B, and C are normal aging changes of the urinary system, but they do not affect stress incontinence.

- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Genitourinary
24. ANS: A
Decreased vaginal secretions decrease the natural lubrication of the vagina, which can cause painful intercourse and increase the potential for vaginal infections. Responses B, C, and D are unrelated to painful intercourse. Urinary incontinence can increase the incidence of vaginal infections.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Genitourinary
25. ANS: D
Shortened sleeping time (response B) and frequent waking (response A) are not as distressing to older adults as waking in the morning and still feeling tired. This feeling is related to the decrease in REM and stage IV sleep. Older adults rarely complain of not being able to nap during the day (response C).
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Neurological
26. ANS: C
Decreased peristalsis, caused by the decrease in smooth muscle tone, delays gastric emptying, leading to indigestion and decreased appetite. Decreased peristalsis also allows more water absorption in the large intestine, creating constipation. Increased fatigue, increased discomfort, and decreased activity create situations in which individuals have a nutritionally inadequate diet.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Gastrointestinal
27. ANS: A
Studies have shown that older adults compensate for increased reaction time by increasing the accuracy of their responses. Older adults may choose to quit driving, avoid situations that require a quick response, and use ambulation aids (responses B, C, and D), but this is not a general reaction to increased reaction time. Older adults instead complete a task perfectly, drive slowly, and ambulate with care.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Neurological
28. ANS: D
Dryness of the eyes can lead to irritation and eye infections. Eye dryness is usually not severe enough to cause corneal abrasions (response B). Glaucoma and the development of cataracts are not related to eye dryness (responses A and C).
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Ear, nose, and throat
29. ANS: A
Presbycusis, or loss of high-frequency tones, is the characteristic hearing loss of normal aging. Responses B, C, and D are incorrect.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Ear, nose, and throat
30. ANS: B
Increasing the volume and pitch (responses A and C) of the voice moves the voice into the high-frequency tones that are difficult for an older adult to hear. Response D is inappropriate. Older adults can hear a normally pitched, clearly articulated voice (response B).
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Ear, nose, and throat
31. ANS: C
Because of yellowing of the lens of the eye with normal aging, older adults have difficulty seeing and differentiating low tone colors, such as blue, green, purple, and brown. Yellow and red are the colors of choice for signs and safety markings (response C).

- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Implementation | Patient Care Area: Visual
32. ANS: A
The change in accommodation to light and dark takes longer and increases the incidence of falls for older adults. Responses B, C, and D do not place an older adult at risk for falling.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Visual
33. ANS: A
The increased keratin in the cerumen makes it drier and increases the likelihood of it impacting in the ear canal. There is no documentation of an increased cerumen production with aging (response B). Older adults frequently use cotton-tipped applicators. This practice is not advisable because there is a tendency to push impacted cerumen deeper into the ear canal (response C). Bathing and washing the external canal do not affect the production of cerumen or prevent the development of cerumen impaction (response D).
- PTS: 1
KEY: Nursing Process Step: Nursing Diagnosis | Patient Care Area: Ear, nose, and throat
34. ANS: B
As motor neurons work less efficiently, reaction time and the ability to respond to stimuli decrease. Older adults frequently have the potential for hypotensive episodes, with position change secondary to decreased blood volume.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Neurological
35. ANS: B
ADLs are the ability to take care of basic personal needs. Eating, dressing, and moving are basic. Cooking requires a greater level of independence.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Aging
36. ANS: C
IADLs are the ability to live independently in the community. These are higher level skills. Toileting is a basic task; cleaning, managing finances, and taking medications require a greater level of independence.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Aging
37. ANS: D
As part of the normal aging process, the body shows signs of use—wear and tear. Among these signs is decreased cartilage causing the need for knee replacement, slower movement, and possible use of a walker because of decreased bone mass and reduced muscle strength. Response D is incorrect. Many older people do not have chronic diseases, and chronic diseases are not inevitable with age.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Aging
38. ANS: D
The presence of any chronic diseases, the nutritional status of the person, and family history, which can play a role in the development of certain diseases and in life span, all are important parts of the initial assessment of an elderly adult.
- PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Not applicable

TRUE/FALSE

1. ANS: T

A normal age-related change is a reduction in subcutaneous fat, often leading an older adult to feel cold and to ask for sweaters. This reduction in subcutaneous fat and decreased sweat production may also cause an older adult not to exhibit diaphoresis even with a fever.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Integumentary

2. ANS: T

Age-related skin dryness and decreased elasticity increase the risk of skin breakdown and skin tears, leading to increased potential for injury and infection.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Integumentary

3. ANS: T

During the aging process, the walls of the blood vessels thicken and become less elastic, often leading to increases in blood pressure.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Cardiovascular

4. ANS: F

Blood volume is decreased in an older adult because of decreased total body water.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Cardiovascular

5. ANS: T

RBCs carrying hemoglobin are produced in the bone marrow; a decrease in bone marrow production frequently leads to a decrease in levels of RBCs, hemoglobin, and hematocrit.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Cardiovascular

6. ANS: F

The age-related changes affecting the respiratory system are so gradual that most older adults compensate well.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Cardiovascular

7. ANS: T

Osteoporosis often causes compression of the vertebral column, leading to a bent-over or stooped posture. This posture allows less space for lung expansion and air flow.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Assessment | Patient Care Area: Respiratory

8. ANS: T

Although the genetic theory of aging claims that humans are born with a genetic program that predetermines their life span, a healthy diet, exercise, and stress control support a higher quality of life, if not adding to longevity.

PTS: 1 KEY: Nursing Process Step: Not applicable | Patient Care Area: Not applicable