

### HEALTH AND AGING: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

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**B**reaking news! We are all aging. If you are sixty-five and older, the term elderly applies to you. In *Merck*, the medical consumer manual, Dr. Richard W. Besdine gives an overview of aging: “Aging is a gradual, continuous process of natural change that begins in early adulthood. During early middle age, many bodily functions begin to gradually decline.”

Traditionally, sixty-five has been designated as the beginning of old age, because that was the age chosen for retirement. Old age can be classified in three different ways:

1. **Chronological age** which is based solely on the passage of time. It’s a person’s age in years.
2. **Biological age** which refers to changes in the body that commonly occur as people age. Because these changes affect some people sooner than others, some people are biologically old.

3. **Psychological age** which is based on how people act and feel. For example, an eighty-year-old who works, plans, looks forward to future events, and participates in numerous activities is considered psychologically young.

Common illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, arthritis, osteoporosis, and the risk for falls are usually considered part of the aging process, while the emotional and social aspects are overlooked. It’s also important to mention that sadness and complaining about nonspecific pain, and the inability to verbalize their feelings, in many cases, can be attributed to the normal aspects of aging and contribute to the failure to detect depression. “When faced with unavoidable or inescapable negative events, older adults experience relatively high levels of physiological distress that can be highly disruptive to physical and mental health.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come” (Psalm 71:18, NIV).**



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