

## **Premature Aging**

As we get older, our body's internal processes from skin cell turnover to workout recovery slow down & take longer to complete or recharge. Aging is the general wear and tear of our bodies which occurs over time. Although it is a natural process and cannot be prevented, but various factors can fasten it.

Over time, our bodies naturally change, but these changes may be surprising if they happen earlier than expected, hence the term "**Premature Aging.**" Premature aging is when the typical effects of growing older happen early. It is when our body looks older than our actual age. The causes may be Environmental, Dietary & Lifestyle factors.

While lifestyle habits and dietary choices are not the only things that can speed up aging, they are certainly some of the most critical factors. Although some aspects of aging are inevitable, but there are a few unconscious habits that can accelerate the process.

## **Causes of Premature Aging**

- **Unhealthy Dietary Habits**
  - Diets high in sugar or refined carbohydrates & ultra-processed foods may cause premature aging.
- **Consuming too much Alcohol**
  - Drinking too much alcohol can dehydrate & damage skin over time, leading to signs of premature aging.
  - It also affects blood sugar & damages the genetic material in cells, leading to accelerated aging.
- **Habitual Smoking**
  - Toxins in nicotine alter the cells, break down collagen & elastic fibers in skin, leading to sagging, wrinkles & a hollow gaunt face.
- **Caffeine Dependency**
  - Caffeine is a diuretic, which causes fluids to expel out. Drinking too much coffee can cause dehydration, leading to dry & dull looking skin.
- **Insufficient Sleep**
  - Sleep gives our body an opportunity to refresh and regenerate cells.
  - Low quality (or not enough) sleep makes our cells age faster.
- **Overwhelming Stress or Anxiety**
  - Stressed brain pumps out Cortisol which blocks Hyaluronan Synthase & Collagen whose work is to keep skin plump & vibrant
- **Excessive Sun Exposure**
  - Ultraviolet light & exposure to sunlight ages skin more quickly than it would age naturally. This is called photoaging, which is responsible for 90% of skin changes.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle**
  - Sedentary body produces less testosterone which is responsible for developing and maintaining muscle mass.
  - Lack of exercise can lead to weakened muscles, reduced bone density & an increased risk of Obesity, Heart disease & Type 2 Diabetes.
- **High Glucose Levels**
  - Glycemia resulting from high glucose levels is actually a biomarker for perceived age.
- **In Rare Cases, certain disorders can also cause Premature Aging**
  - Bloom syndrome
  - Cockayne syndrome
  - Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome
  - Rothmund-Thomson syndrome.
  - Seip syndrome
  - Werner syndrome

## **Signs of Premature Aging**

- **Thin Wrinkled Skin with easy Bruising**
  - As we get older, the skin becomes thinner, loses fat & elasticity
  - Aging damage causes brittle skin that breaks, bruises easily& gets wrinkled
- **Sun Spots**
  - Sun spots, also called as Age spots are flat spots on skin caused by excessive sun exposure.
  - These hyper-pigmented spots may develop on face, back of hands & forearms.
- **Muscle Weakness**
  - As we age, our lean body mass decreases, muscles fibers shrink & damaged muscle tissues are repaired slowly
  - We may find it harder to lift weights, climbing stairs& stand up from a seated position.
  - Weak muscles may also cause balance issues.
- **Hand Strength**
  - Our grip strength usually starts to drop as we age, we might find it harder to open a jar or our hold on the steering wheel firmly.
- **Stiff Achy Joints**
  - When we age, our joints become stiffer, less flexible as the cartilage wears down & fluid decreases.
  - These changes can cause pain, weakness, impaired mobility, balance issues & poor posture.
- **Slow Walking**
  - If the walking pace slows with aging, it may be a sign we are aging faster than usual
- **Vision Issues**
  - Common age-related vision problems include difficulty in seeing things close-up (like reading), difficulty to distinguish between colors & trouble adjusting to changing levels of light.
- **Hearing Loss**
  - Aging leads to changes in inner & middle ear, as well as the nerve pathways from ear to brain, which affect our hearing.
  - Many a times we aren't aware that the hearing loss is happening, it's just one day, we may notice that we need to turn up the volume of television than usual or ask people to speak up.
- **Hair Loss or Graying**
  - As we get older, hair becomes thinner & falls out faster.
  - Another obvious sign of aging is changes in hair color or texture.
  - Gray or white hair occurs from a loss of melanin, which is produced by the hair follicles. As we age the follicles produce less melanin, so when a new hair grows, it looks gray or white
- **Memory Problems**
  - Mild memory changes go along with aging as it might take us longer to recall
- **Thick Waistline**
  - Body fat tends to shift to our belly as we get older. Risks go up when the waist is more than 35 inches in woman & more than 40 inches in man.
- **Irregular Periods**
  - With aging periods become less regular
  - It's the time leading up to menopause, so the body makes less estrogen which results in periods to be lighter, shorter& come less often

## **Preventive measures for Premature Aging**

- **Avoid Sun Exposure**
  - Use Sunscreen.
  - Wear protective Clothing & Sunglasses.
- **Stop Smoking**
  - Quit smoking as soon as possible.
- **Eat a Balanced Diet & stay Hydrated**
  - A well-balanced diet can stop premature aging.
  - Avoid eating too much sugar or refined carbohydrates.
  - Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- **Cut back on Alcohol**
  - Alcohol causes premature aging of skin, hence reducing its intake can help to prevent further damage
- **Exercise**
  - Regular physical activity improves circulation & boosts immune system, which prevents aging
- **Practice Stress Management**
  - Eliminate as much stress as possible from life.
  - Acquire stress management techniques like Meditation, Yoga or Exercise
- **Improve the Quality &Quantity of Sleep**
  - Sleep is essential to all organs, including skin.
  - Following a sleep schedule will give skin time to refresh and renew itself daily.

### Premature Aging

	<b>Signs of Early Aging -</b>	<b>Consult a doctor if -</b>	<b>Preventive Measures -</b>
<b>Skin</b>	Dry skin Dull skin	Very dry & itchy skin	Short baths with warm water Use moisturizer Drink plenty of liquid
	Brown Sun spots on face, arms & hand	Turn black Change shape Bleeds Rough border	Wear sunscreen Cover up min the sun Avoid being outdoors between 10 am to 2 pm
	Easy Bruising	Numerous & large bruises on chest, back or face Post medication bruise	Most of the bruises are self-healing
<b>Memory</b>	Mild memory loss Takes longer to recall	Dementia	Eat healthy Stay socially active Exercise
<b>Legs</b>	Achy joints Stiff joints	Osteoarthritis	Flexibility exercise Aerobic exercise Strength training
	Slow walking	Walking with support	Walking – 5 min to 30 min
	Problem in climbing stairs	Struggling with daily activities Balance issues	Slow stair climbing Regular exercise
<b>Hands</b>	Reduced hand strength Difficulty in opening the jar Grip on steering wheel is not firm	Early & sudden loss of grip strength	Increase hand strength by Playing with clay Squishing stress ball Wringing water from washed clothes
<b>Vision</b>	Difficulties in reading Presbyopia	Glaucoma Cataract Macular degeneration	Wear sunglasses Stop smoking Eat healthy Exercise Regular eye checkups
<b>Waistline</b>	Thick waist Woman > 35 inches Man > 40 inches	Thick waist with Heart problem or Type 2 Diabetes	Regular exercise Healthy diet
<b>Periods</b>	Irregular periods Short cycle Light periods	Painful periods Early menopause	Regular checkups