
UNIT 4 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN AGEING PROCESS

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
 - 4.1 Objectives
 - 4.2 Ageing Process
 - 4.2.1 Ageing Process in Women
 - 4.2.2 Ageing Process in Men
 - 4.3 Ageing Issues and Challenges in Early Adulthood
 - 4.4 Ageing Issues and Challenges in Middle Adulthood
 - 4.5 Ageing Issues and Challenges in Late Adulthood
 - 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
 - 4.7 Unit End Questions
 - 4.8 Suggested Readings
 - 4.9 Answer to the Self Check Questions
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4.0 INTRODUCTION

As we age, our bodies change in many ways that affect the function of both individual cells and organ systems. These changes occur little by little and progress inevitably over time. However, the rate of this progression can vary differently for different persons. The ageing process brings with it many challenges, as for instance not being physically as strong as in the earlier years, facing different types of responsibilities , crisis and conflicts. For tackling these challenges one must have varying coping abilities which itself is a challenge. In this unit we will be dealing with the type of challenges one faces as one grows old and the varying coping strategies that they need to have to overcome the same.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- define and describe the ageing process in men and women;
- explain the ageing issues and challenges in early adulthood;
- analyse the ageing issues and challenges in middle adulthood; and
- explain the ageing issues and challenges in late adulthood.

4.2 AGEING PROCESS

Ageing or ageing is a process that accumulates changes in organisms or objects over time. Human ageing process involves multidimensional changes on physical, psychological, cultural and social levels.

As soon as an individual is born, their body begins to age. This process continues throughout our life. Ageing is not simply about old age. It is the lifelong process by which we define the social, mental, and biological stages in our lives.

A newborn baby is developing new cells and shedding dead cells daily. The “peach fuzz” hair is replaced with new hair that is stronger and more colored. The skin begins to adapt to the “out-of-umbilical-fluid” environment.

Bodies continue to grow in the toddler years into puberty and adolescence. Constant changes take place in the body until the height, determined by genetics, is reached. Then the body starts to spread a little here and there, taking a new shape of body style in the adult years.

Changes in our body are sometimes described as deterioration, such as gray hair, wrinkles, loss of hearing, the need for bifocals. These are just normal changes as the body progresses. A person over the age of 50 can still be vital and healthy. Hardening of the arteries, bone density loss, and slowing metabolism are more signs of the normal ageing process.

Ageing retardation could stretch out our entire life cycle like a rubber band, extending the time we spend in infancy, childhood, adolescence, prime, and senior years. Yet there is always the risk of a serious rift between the maturity of the body/mind and the expectations and requirements of life.

The ageing process in humans is a complex biochemical process which includes all the changes taking place socially, psychologically and physically. The process of ageing in the human body is inevitable and there are many signs of ageing occurring both within and outside the human body. Ageing, also known as senescence, is a process that every human being goes through, but the ageing process in women slightly differs from the ageing process in men. As we age, there are a number of changes taking place in the various systems of the human body, which may, at times cause age-related problems and disorders.

The intensity of problems and challenges depends on a combination of both genetic and environmental factors. Again recognising that every individual has his or her own unique genetic makeup and environment, which interact with each other, helps us understand why the ageing process can occur at such different rates in different people. Overall, genetic factors seem to be more powerful than environmental factors in determining the large differences among people in ageing and lifespan.

Ageing or ageing is a process that accumulates changes in organisms or objects over time. Human ageing process involves multidimensional changes on physical, psychological, cultural and social levels.

Heredity, diet, exercise, social involvement, and spirituality all play a large part in your physical wellbeing. Eating right and exercising will keep your body healthier and may stave off some of the effects of ageing, or at least slow the ageing process.

Women are naturally obsessed with their looks and their world revolves around their looks and looks only. Ageing is an inevitable natural process and there is no treatment for ageing process. Although, it is true that women face much different challenges than men in ageing process, the key to fight ageing process in women, solely depends upon her perspective about life. If she decides to age gracefully, nothing can deter her from leading a beautiful life.

Ageing, from the male perspective, is frequently associated with loss of physical and mental function and vitality. The implied stigma that comes with ageing often prevents men from dealing with important health issues associated with the process.

During middle adulthood, the two primary long-term relationships characteristic are

cohabitation and marriage. Cohabitors are unmarried people living together in a sexual relationship, often state their reason for cohabiting as either a trial for marriage or an alternative to marriage.

Middle adulthood refers to the people who are experiencing changes and development in their central lives. It is basically about the midlife transition or the period of life beyond young adulthood but before the commencement of old age.

Elder care can be thought of as an umbrella of care and services for the frail elderly. These include a broad range of services including: meals and socialisation, personal care, light housekeeping, residential facilities, and adult day care.

The process of ageing in the human body starts at middle age around 45. The process and its effects depend on both, the genetic as well as environmental factors and hence, some of the aspects of the ageing process may differ from person to person. To understand the human ageing process better, let us try and understand the cellular changes that occur along with the ageing process.

Ageing causes some amount of reduction in the rate of human cell multiplication (cellular senescence) and also causes some of the cells to function inappropriately. It also interferes with the growth and development of the body tissues which leads to the development of various immune system related disorders.

Heredity, diet, exercise, social involvement, and spirituality all play a large part in your physical wellbeing. Eating right and exercising will keep one's body healthier and may stave off some of the effects of ageing, or at least slow the ageing process.

4.2.1 Ageing Process in Women

Women are considerably concerned with their looks and their world revolves around their looks and looks only. It's as though physical appearance is the only thing that matters to them in the world. Obviously, when the first few physical signs of ageing start showing up, their world is shattered into bits. Besides, being the more sensitive gender, the emotional and psychological changes that accompany ageing are difficult to cope. Ageing brings about changes on the physical, psychological and social front of a woman's life.

Physical Challenges

Menopause is the word that immediately comes to one's mind when we say ageing process in women. The woman's life is divided into two phases premenopausal and postmenopausal. The hormonal changes in the body cause many ageing problems. The body starts losing out on bone mass and muscle strength. These weakened bones often result in osteoporosis and arthritis, which accompany the woman throughout the rest of her life. The skin becomes sunken and sallow and eventually, wrinkles begin to appear. The immune system is no longer able to produce sufficient anti bodies, thereby making the body susceptible to various illnesses. Most vital organs show diminished performance, which affects the entire health of the woman.

Psychological Challenges

These are to an extent related to physical status of the individual. Menopause is the buzz word here. The hormonal changes during menopause bring about plethora of behavioural changes in a woman. The very fact that they are no longer fertile, is enough to send many women into depression. Emotional insecurity haunts their mind due to the fear that since she is no longer physically attractive, her spouse may not love her. She may become extremely moody and irritated as she may not be able to cope with the

many changes that happen all at once in her life. Lastly, there is this daunting feeling of ageing that she somehow relates with the ‘end’. However, some optimistic women may take this as an opportunity to fulfill their unaccomplished dreams and lead a life the way they always wanted to.

Social Challenges

During ageing process in women, their social life entirely depends upon their own attitude towards life and most importantly their health. Some women, due to their poor health or some other reason, may completely shut themselves away from the world. While the other, more outgoing group, may engage themselves in community activities or some hobbies and interests. Most women in this age group are financially settled and have a family that is no longer dependent upon them. Thus, this period poses a golden chance for them to live the life for themselves.

Ageing is an inevitable natural process and there is no treatment for ageing process. Although, it is true that women face much different challenges than men in ageing process, the key to fight ageing process in women, solely depends upon her perspective about life. If she decides to age gracefully, nothing can deter her from leading a beautiful life.

4.2.2 Ageing Process in Men

Ageing, from the male perspective, is frequently associated with loss of physical and mental function and vitality. The implied stigma that comes with ageing often prevents men from dealing with important health issues associated with the process. Ageing process in men has always been related with the decrease of mental and physical functions. The ageing process in men brings physiological changes in the body. Men, in their middle age, do bulge around the middle due to accumulation of a lot of unburned fat and lack of exercises. Ageing process in men does not treat all the men in the same way. The day you notice a grey hair, standing out among the rest of your black hair, you may observe your boss, who is senior in age to you, darting from one place to another, as if he is a 16 year old kid. This may make you wonder, how this chap is managing to stay so fit, at his age.

Whole health

When the ageing process starts, a whole foods diet high in fiber, low in saturated fat, and rich in nutrients is the best health-promoting approach. Eating fresh vegetables and fruits rich in antioxidant nutrients and fiber helps reduce the risk factors for cancer. Consistent moderate exercise promotes cardiovascular health as well as reduces the risk factors for obesity, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Together with an approach to stress management, diet and exercise form the foundation of an overall health plan.

Mental health

Mental health is an important concern for many men, as Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia which are common to occur during this age may afflict the individual. Maintaining mental health and function as we age is a growing concern. Herbal extracts like ginkgo biloba and nutrients like phosphatidyl serine and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), a component of fish oil can greatly assist in promoting mental health and function.

Standardized ginkgo extracts help increase circulation to the brain and extremities, act as an antioxidant in the brain and retina, and protect nerve cells through a reduction in platelet aggregation. By promoting blood flow to the brain and reducing potential damage to nerve cells, ginkgo supports cognitive function and can help stave off diseases such as Alzheimer’s Disease and Senile Dementia.

Heart health

The most obvious concern for men as they age is heart health and disease. Cardiovascular disease is still among the most common causes of death among men. Diet and lifestyle play a significant role in the progression of cardiovascular disease and are also central to its treatment. Natural medicines can also play a key role in helping to reduce the risk and complications of heart disease.

High fiber foods and a reduced intake of meats high in fat combined with a program of daily exercise and stress reduction techniques have shown very positive results in even the worst heart disease.

Prostate health

Prostate health is a consideration for men once they reach the age of 40. Over the age of 40, it is estimated that 60 percent of men will have an enlarged prostate (also known as BPH, benign prostatic hyperplasia). As men age, the likelihood that they will develop BPH increases. Although the initial symptoms of prostate enlargement may be considered minimal, and only slightly bothersome, proactive care can greatly reduce the risk for more serious complications.

Standardized extracts of herbs like saw palmetto, nettle, and pygeum are frequently recommended along with pollen extracts. Natural therapies like pollen extracts and saw palmetto can also help reduce the effects of testosterone breakdown products on prostate cells. High levels of dihydrotestosterone (DHT) have been associated with prostate cancer.

Skeletal health

Joint and bone health issues are also common problems for men in which past sports injuries and wear and tear can lead to osteoarthritis. As one ages, our connective tissue is not able to repair itself as efficiently as when we were younger. Additional nutrition is often necessary to promote cartilage healing and prevent further breakdown of joint tissue associated with osteoarthritis.

Although many men do not think about osteoporosis, it, too, is a major concern for men as they age. Although women have bone health risks related to changes in hormone levels, as many as one-sixth of all men will fracture a hip during their lifetime.

The ageing process is a natural one. Ageing, however, does not have to mean loss of function or vitality. In fact, healthful eating habits in combination with focused nutrients and herbs can combine to make the 40-plus years the best of any man's life.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Discuss the ageing process in females.

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- 2) What are the important factors associated with ageing in males?

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- 3) What are the typical health issues associated with ageing ?

4.3 AGEING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. It is the first stage of adulthood in which the body physically changes and is one of the hardest times in our lives after teenage years.

Neither intimacy nor individual development can exist alone. The birth of a child initiates a human being into a life-long process of mutual adaptation between the child, his or her intimate relationship partners and the broader social environment. Intimate interactions and relationships affect adaptations to the changing needs and stresses that evolve with each stage of development throughout one's lifetime. Intimate interactions from early life serve as the basis upon which relationships later in life are formed. Environmental contingencies to which individuals must adapt are rooted in these relationships. In an attempt to adapt to other people's styles of relating, one must adjust his or her own behaviours.

Maturity

Children entering adolescence must begin to adapt to the adult world and its institutions while coming to terms with emerging parts of themselves. They discover themselves as having new emotional and sexual needs. As they make these discoveries, adolescents begin to realise the limitations of their parents. Taking responsibility for aspects of their own character requires distancing from authoritative.

Friendships

Over the course of social development, the role of friends and parents changes significantly. As an adolescent undergoes physical and emotional changes, he or she seeks out relationships that enhance efforts to adapt to new needs and stresses. Adolescents seek to share their thoughts and feelings with those who are experiencing similar changes. Intimate interactions increase between friends during this stage in life because they provide teens with opportunities for self-clarification. Through the formation of co-constructive dialogues between friends, teens can participate together in exploring and constructing selves.

Multiple Selves

During late adolescence, one must first confront the problem of multiple selves. For the first time, an adolescent realises that his or her personality changes from one situation to

the next. This is the stage of life during which one looks to craft a narrative of the self that provides a sense of sameness and continuity. The importance of intimate friendship and romance formed during early adulthood stems from the valuable and adaptive contribution dialogues made with friends during adolescence. Personality differences can be identified by capacities to form intimate relationships characterised by commitment, depth, and partner individuation based on interactions of early life.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Fill in the blanks:

- i) Human ageing process involves _____ changes on physical, psychological, cultural and social levels.
- ii) Eating fresh vegetables and fruits rich in _____ nutrients helps reduce the risk factors for cancer.
- iii) High levels of _____ have been associated with prostate cancer.
- iv) Neither _____ nor individual development can exist alone.
- v) Joint and bone health issues can lead to _____.

2) Answer the following statements with True or False:

- i) Ageing process continues throughout our life.
- ii) Eating right and exercise can keep the ageing process slow.
- iii) The hormonal changes in the body is not concerned with ageing problems.
- iv) Prostate health is a consideration for women once they reach the age of 40.
- v) The ageing process is a natural one.

3) What are the ageing issues and challenges in early adulthood?

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4.4 AGEING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Middle adulthood refers to the people whom are experiencing changes and development in their central lives. It is basically about the midlife transition or the period of life beyond young adulthood but before the commencement of old age.

Physical Appearance

The changes in physical appearance are some of the most notable parts for many people as they experience middle adulthood physical development. Hair begins turning gray or white as teeth fade from white to yellow. More wrinkles appear, especially on the face, and skin begins to sag.

The ability to hear high-pitched noises disappears during middle adulthood as most people begin recognising hearing loss around 40. Men experience twice as much hearing loss as women during this life stage. Vision also decreases for both sexes as their ability to focus declines, and they need brighter lights to see.

Health

This stage of development generally refers to the diseases experienced by the individuals and the diseases are few infectious yet more chronic. Heart diseases and cancer are the two most common sicknesses for people in midlife period. The experience of health decline is different for men and women. Men are more prone to heart disease, cancer and stroke especially on the incidence that men had experience or are experiencing divorce. For women, non-fatal illnesses like goiter, gout or arthritis and lung and breast cancer. Though death is fewer for females than in males, diabetic cases are inclined on the female's part more than the males. The gain or lost in this domain generally depends on how people take care of themselves while they are still young and capable to do so.

Strength and Coordination

As adults pass through middle adulthood their strength begins to diminish as some of their muscle is replaced with fat. Flexibility also decreases, and the reaction time of individuals in middle adulthood decreases as well.

Sexuality

The start of middle adulthood often signifies the end of a woman's ability to bear children. They proceed to go through menopause during this middle-age stage in their life. Men still possess the ability to reproduce although their fertility decreases in middle adulthood as they age.

Disease

Diabetes, heart disease and cancer are just a few of the common diseases discovered during middle adulthood. While chances are these diseases have been building up in an individual throughout their life, the discovery and treatment of them often occurs when people are in middle age.

Relationships during Middle Adulthood

During middle adulthood, the two primary long-term relationships characteristic are cohabitation and marriage. Cohabitors are unmarried people living together in a sexual relationship, often state their reason for cohabiting as either a trial for marriage or an alternative to marriage.

By middle age, most of the adults are married. Marital satisfaction is often described in terms of a U-curve: People generally affirm that their marriages are happiest during the early years, but not as happy during the middle years. Marital satisfaction then increases again in the later years, once finances have stabilised and parenting responsibilities have ended.

Divorce

Middle adults are not immune to problems in relationships. The reasons for dissolving a relationship are many and varied, just as relationships themselves differ in their make-up and dynamics. In some cases, the couple cannot handle an extended crisis. In other cases, the spouses change and grow in different directions. In still others, the spouses

are completely incompatible from the very start. However, long-term relationships rarely end because of difficulties with just one of the partners. Both parties are usually responsible for the factors that may lead to a relationship's end, such as conflicts, problems, growing out of love, or empty-nest issues that arise after the last child leaves his or her parent's home.

Love changes over time, and such changes may become evident by middle adulthood. The ideal form of love in adulthood involves three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment—termed consummate love, or complete love. This variety of love is unselfish, devoted, and is most often associated with romantic relationships. Getting started is easy; sticking to it is much harder.

For many middle-aged couples, passion fades as intimacy and commitment build. In other words, many middle adults find themselves in a marriage typified by companionate love, which is both committed and intimate, but not passionate. Yet a relationship that has lost its sexual nature need not remain this way, nor do such changes necessitate the end of a long-term relationship. In fact, many middle adult couples find effective ways of improving their ability to communicate, increasing emotional intimacy, rekindling the fires of passion, and growing together. The understanding that evolves between two people over time can be striking.

Relationships that last

Long-term relationships share several factors, including both partners regarding the relationship as a long-term commitment; both verbally and physically expressing appreciation, admiration, and love; both offering emotional support to each other; and both considering the other as a best friend.

Essential to preserving a quality relationship is the couple's decision to practice effective communication. Communication is the means by which intimacy is established and nurtured within a relationship; it helps partners better relate to and understand each other. Communication helps them feel close, connected, and loved.

Friends

Friends offer support, direction, guidance, and a change of pace from usual routines. During this period, life responsibilities are at an all-time high, so having extra time for socialising is usually rare. For this reason, middle adults may have less friends than their newlywed and retired counterparts. Yet where quantity of friendships may be lacking, quality predominates. Some of the closest ties between friends are formed and nourished during middle adulthood.

Children

As adults wait later to marry and start families, more and more middle adults find themselves rearing small children. Middle adults and their adolescent children are both prone to emotional crises, which may occur at the same time. For adolescents, the crisis involves the search for identity; for middle adults, the search is for generativity. These two crises are not always compatible, as parents try to deal with their own issues as well as those of their adolescents.

Parents respond to their children's adolescence in different ways. Some middle adults attempt to live out their own youthful fantasies—sexual and otherwise—through their children. They may try to make their teenage children into improved versions of themselves. For example, some parents may force their teenagers to take music lessons or make them join a sports team, while other parents may insist that their children attend a certain college or enter the family business.

Witnessing their children on the verge of becoming adults can also trigger a midlife crisis for some middle adults. The adolescent journey into young adulthood is a reminder to middle-aged parents of their own ageing processes and inescapable settling into middle and later adulthood.

Middle-aged parents typically maintain close relationships with their grown up children who have left home. Many parents report feeling as if they continue to give more than receive from relationships with their children, including helping with their finances or watching their pets when they are out of town. Still, most middle adults and their grown children tend to value their time together, even as their respective roles continue to change.

Parents

Most middle adults characterise the relationship with their parents as affectionate. Indeed, a strong bond is often present between related middle and older adults. Although the majority of middle adults do not live with their parents, contacts are usually frequent and positive. And perhaps for the first time, middle adults are able to see their parents as the fallible human beings that they are.

One issue facing middle adults is that of caring for their ageing parents. In some cases, adults, who expected to spend their middle-age years traveling and enjoying their own children and grandchildren, instead find themselves taking care of their ailing parents. Some parents are completely independent of their adult children's support, while others are partially independent of their children; and still others are completely dependent.

Children of dependent parents may assist them financially (paying their bills), physically (bringing them into their homes and caring for them), and emotionally (as a source of human contact as the parents' social circle diminishes). Daughters and daughters-in-law are the most common caretakers of ageing parents and in-laws.

Even though the death of a parent is never welcome, some long-term adult caretakers express ambivalent feelings about the event. The grown children of parents dying of a lingering illness, for example, usually do not want to see their loved ones suffer—even if alleviation means death. These children may find themselves hoping simultaneously for a cure and for a peaceful release from the pain that their parent is experiencing.

4.5 AGEING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN LATE ADULTHOOD

Elder care can be thought of as an umbrella of care and services for the frail elderly. These include a broad range of services including: meals and socialisation, personal care, light housekeeping, residential facilities, and adult day care.

There are few physical differences among a group of first graders. But if you check out the same group 65 years later, their physical differences outnumber their similarities. Some will be the epitome of health, while others will be managing one or more chronic conditions. Some will be vigorous, while others will be lethargic.

As we get older, we become physically less like our peers. That's because we are the sum of our life experiences. At age six, not too much has happened to our bodies to make us radically different from our peers. But by middle and old age, we've had decades to develop and maintain habits that have an impact on our health, both negatively and positively.

Ageing may be inevitable, but the rate of ageing is not. Why and how our bodies age is still largely a mystery, although we are learning more and more each year. Scientists do maintain, however, that chronological age has little bearing on biological age. The number of candles on your birthday cake merely serves as a marker of time; it says little about your health.

The human body goes through a variety of changes as it gets older. In general, muscles, blood vessels and other tissues lose their elasticity. The heart becomes less efficient, bones become weaker and the metabolism slows down.

In spite of the changes to the rest of the body, a lot of people focus primarily on changes to their appearance as they age. These include:

Wrinkles

Fibers in the skin called collagen and elastin break down and lose strength as a person gets older. Sun exposure throughout life contributes to this process. Without these fibers, the skin cannot hold its shape as well. Older skin retains less fat, making it look less supple. The pull of gravity also causes the skin to sag.

Dry skin

Older people produce less sweat and oil, causing their skin to be drier. Excessively dry skin can emphasise the appearance of wrinkles.

Age spots

Dark spots on the skin, particularly the arms, hands, face and feet, stem from cumulative exposure to the sun. Most people call these marks liver spots, but they are unrelated to liver function. They actually stem from overproduction of the pigment melanin in areas of the skin that have experienced the most exposure to the sun.

Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome

It is seen that most of the adults aged 60 and older are overweight or obese. Obesity is related to type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, breast and colon cancer, gall bladder disease, and high blood pressure.

Women in perimenopause and menopause tend to accumulate fat around the waist and hips, and men get the gut. The food intake should be in check by reducing calorie intake and alcohol intake because a lot of alcohol calories go right to the gut. Also, increase in healthy fat intake such as omega-3 fatty acids and unsaturated fats, and eliminate trans fats completely. Foods sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup should be avoided. The common sweetener is found in everything from sodas to breakfast cereal to low-fat yogurt.

Arthritis

Arthritis affects nearly half the elderly population and is a leading cause of disability. The keys to prevention is to avoid overuse, do steady, regular exercise rather than in weekend spurts, and stop if you feel pain.

Managing one's weight is just as essential for joint health as cardiovascular health.

Osteoporosis and Falls

Osteoporosis and low bone mass affect most of the adults age 50 and older, most of them are women. According to the National Osteoporosis Association, osteoporosis is not part of normal ageing. Healthy behaviours and treatment, when appropriate, can

prevent or minimize the condition. Weight-bearing exercise also helps to keep bones healthy.

Cancer

Risk for developing most types of cancer increases with age. As women age, the rate of cervical cancer decreases, and endometrial cancer increases. The risk of prostate cancer increases with age, and black men have a higher rate than white men. Screening should start in your 40s, and at the very least should involve a digital rectal examination.

Lung cancer accounts for more deaths than breast cancer, prostate cancer, and colon cancer combined.

Vision and Hearing Loss

Age-related eye diseases such as macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma affects people aged 40 and older. Eating foods with high antioxidant content may be helpful in reducing vision loss due to macular degeneration. Regular eye exams should include screening for glaucoma, which is called “the sneak thief of sight” for the fact that the first symptom is vision loss. The disease can be arrested, but vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored.

The incidence of hearing loss increases with age. Hearing loss takes a toll on the quality of life and can lead to depression and withdrawal from social activities. Although hearing aids can help, only one out of four people use them.

High-frequency hearing loss is common in old age and made worse by a lifestyle that includes exposure to loud sounds.

Mental Health: Memory and Emotional Well-being

Staying mentally active is as important as staying physically active. One of the perplexing problems of ageing is Alzheimer’s disease. Depression is often underdiagnosed and untreated. Many people mistakenly believe that depression is a natural condition of old age. One of the biggest life changes is retirement. Many people have their sense of worth tied up with work. In retirement, depression and suicide rates rise.

Self Assessment Questions

3) Fill in the blanks:

- i) Diabetes, _____ and cancer are common diseases discovered during middle adulthood.
- ii) _____ is often described in terms of a U-curve.
- iii) Passion fades as intimacy and _____ build.
- iv) Older skin retains _____ fat.
- v) In retirement, depression and _____ rates rise.

4) Answer the following statements with True or False:

- i) Men experience twice as much hearing loss as women during middle life stage.
- ii) Women are more prone to heart disease, cancer and stroke.

- iii) Long term relationship requires long term commitment.
- iv) Daughters and daughters-in-law are the most common caretakers of ageing parents and in-laws.
- v) Older people produce more of sweat and oil.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

The ageing process depends on a combination of both genetic and environmental factors. Recognising that every individual has his or her own unique genetic makeup and environment, which interact with each other, helps us understand why the ageing process can occur at such different rates in different people. Overall, genetic factors seem to be more powerful than environmental factors in determining the large differences among people in ageing and lifespan.

Ageing or aging is a process that accumulates changes in organisms or objects over time. Human ageing process involves multidimensional changes on physical, psychological, cultural and social levels.

Women are naturally obsessed with their looks and their world revolves around their looks and looks only. Ageing is an inevitable natural process and there is no treatment for ageing process. Although, it is true that women face much different challenges than men in ageing process, the key to fight ageing process in women, solely depends upon her perspective about life. If she decides to age gracefully, nothing can deter her from leading a beautiful life.

Menopause is the word that immediately comes to the mind when we say ageing process in women. The woman's life is divided into two phases premenopausal and postmenopausal. The hormonal changes in the body invite many ageing problems. The body starts losing out on bone mass and muscle strength.

During ageing process in women, their social life entirely depends upon their own attitude towards life and most importantly their health. Some women, due to their poor health or some other reason, may completely shut themselves away from the world.

Ageing, from the male perspective, is frequently associated with loss of physical and mental function and vitality. The implied stigma that comes with ageing often prevents men from dealing with important health issues associated with the process.

Prostate health is a consideration for men once they reach the age of 40. Over the age of 40, it is estimated that 60 percent of men will have an enlarged prostate (also known as BPH, benign prostatic hyperplasia).

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. Intimate interactions and relationships affect adaptations to the changing needs and stresses that evolve with each stage of development throughout one's lifetime. Intimate interactions from early life serve as the basis upon which relationships later in life are formed.

By middle age, most of the adults are married. Marital satisfaction is often described in terms of a U-curve: People generally affirm that their marriages are happiest during the early years, but not as happy during the middle years. Marital satisfaction then increases again in the later years, once finances have stabilised and parenting responsibilities have ended.

As we get older, we become physically less like our peers. That's because we are the sum of our life experiences. At age six, not too much has happened to our bodies to make us radically different from our peers. But by middle and old age, we've had decades to develop and maintain habits that have an impact on our health, both negatively and positively.

4.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss the ageing process in humans.
 - 2) Ageing process in male and female – discuss the differences.
 - 3) What are the ageing issues and challenges in early adulthood?
 - 4) Discuss the various types of illness one can suffer in middle adulthood.
 - 5) What are the issues and challenges in late adulthood?
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4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Stuart-Hamilton, Ian (2006). *The Psychology of Ageing: An Introduction*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Diane F. Gilmer; Aldwin, Carolyn M. (2003). *Health, Illness, and Poptimal Ageing: Biological and Psychosocial Perspectives*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

4.9 ANSWER TO THE SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1) i) Multidimensional
ii) Antioxidants
iii) Dihydrotestosterone
iv) Intimacy
v) Osteoarthritis
- 2) i) True
ii) True
iii) False
iv) False
v) True
- 3) i) Heart disease
ii) Marital satisfaction
iii) Commitment
iv) Less
v) Suicide
- 4) i) True
ii) False
iii) True
iv) True
v) False