

Middle Adulthood

Dr. Katrina A. Korb
ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos

Middle Adulthood

- **Primary Aging:** Age-related physical changes that have a biological basis, are universally shared, and inevitable
 - Wrinkles, Grey hair, Reduced eyesight
- **Secondary Aging:** Age-related changes due to environmental influences, poor health habits, or disease
- In any individual, it is impossible to differentiate the effects of primary aging and secondary aging

Body Function	Age Change is Clear	Nature
Vision	Mid-40s	Poorer vision and more sensitivity to glare
Hearing	50-60	Loss of ability to hear high or low tones
Smell	40	Declining ability to detect and differentiate smells
Muscles	50	Loss of tissue for bursts of speed or strength
Bones	Mid-30s (women)	Loss of calcium in bones
Heart and lungs	35-40	Changes during exercise/work
Nervous system	Gradual throughout adulthood	Loss of brain volume and weight
Height	40	Compression of disks in spine leads to loss of 1-2 inches by 80 years
Skin	40	Increase wrinkles
Hair	Variable	Grey, thins
Taste	None	

Adapted from: Boyd, D. & Bee, H. (2009). *Lifespan development* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson

Physical Development

- **Climacteric:** Reproductive capacity declines or is lost
 - **Male climacteric:** Very gradual loss of reproductive capacity with reduction in quantity of viable sperm
 - Typically begins in early 40s
 - **Menopause (Female Climacteric):** Cessation of monthly menstrual cycles
 - Typically begins in mid-30s
- Physical exercise is linked to:
 - Longevity (life expectancy)
 - Cognitive abilities

Cognitive Development

- People *think* that the older they get, the more they forget
 - This might be the result of needing to remember more things
- Adults generally maintain, or even gain, on skills for tasks that are done often
- Lack of "mental exercise" is related to declines in memory and thinking skills
 - Major deficits are not found until 60 to 65
- **Creativity:** Ability to produce original, appropriate, and valued ideas or solutions to problems
 - Most notable scientists produced their best work around the age of 40

Social Development

- **Generativity:** Interest in establishing and guiding the next generation (Erikson)
- Developmental tasks: Care for children, Care for aging parents, Work satisfaction/burnout, Preparing for retirement (for some)
- **Role conflict:** Two or more roles are (partially) incompatible because they call for different behaviors or separate demands that require more time than is available
- Job performance remains high throughout middle adulthood except in fields that require speed or strength