



Healthy ageing & lifestyle

Fact Sheet No.1

What is ageing?

Facts and figures

As an age group, the number of over-65s is continuing to increase at a faster rate than any other demographic.

The number of people aged 65 to 84 years has increased by 23%, to 10.6 million, between 2008 and 2018.

The number of people aged 85 years and over has increased by 22.8%, to 1.6 million, between 2008 and 2018 (taken from the Office of National Statistics website).

What is ageing?

There is many a definition of ageing, here are 2 examples:

The gradual, natural deterioration and decay of cells and their replacement over time. It is all part of the cycle of life.

Ageing is the overall natural decline in physical and social functioning, it happens to us all and is inevitable.

Not everyone ages in the same way and this can be due to many factors:

- genetics
- weight
- lifestyle
- health history
- age
- environmental issues
- existing health issues

You may hear the terms, chronological and biological age:

- Chronological age refers to the number of years you have been alive.
- Biological age refers to how old a person appears to be. Some people may look 10 years younger than they are, while others can look some years older.

When does ageing begin?

Some suggest that ageing begins at the moment we are born, whilst others are surprised to learn how soon the functional decline starts in different parts of the body e.g. in our thirties we start to lose muscle mass, and our bone mass stops increasing.

The main signs of ageing

- Our senses become affected and we may need glasses and / or hearing aids.
- We may put on weight, lose or suffer from thinning hair; which goes grey.
- We may develop some of the so-called lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure (as our arteries narrow) and heart disease.
- We may suffer from the long term effects of smoking and alcohol consumption.



Benefits of ageing

While we have a tendency to focus on the negative aspect of ageing we should remember the positives, such as experience, wisdom, maturity and the satisfaction of survival.

What is old age?

The point at which cell deterioration, damage and death outstrips the body's capacity for recovery, repair and growth.

Ageing is the natural, inevitable process of maturing that we are all forced to confront and accept in our own way.

The next fact sheet is a useful checklist for healthy ageing with a disability or long term condition.

Disclaimer

The information and opinions shared on this website are based on my personal experience of working in the health sector and research I have carried out whilst writing articles; it is of a general nature and should not be used as a substitute for seeking medical advice. My aim is to ensure that this information is accurate and kept up to date, but you should always consult the appropriate healthcare professionals if you have a concern about your health.

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