

Are you growing old before your time?

We all want to cling on to our youth for as long as we can. But many of us are letting our bodies age faster than they should. So how can we hold back the clock? Julie McCaffrey asks the experts..

EYES

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal? Medical director of the London Vision Clinic, Professor Dan Reinstein, explains: "Your 30s are a peak time for the eyes because your prescription stabilises, your eyes are not dry and are healthy."

"But from 38 to 48 there's a big change and you start needing to hold things closer or farther away from you to read. That's your first wake-up call to ageing."

What's not normal? Blurry vision through spectacles, eye pain, red eyes.

Turn back the body clock: Prof Reinstein says: "From age 40, visit your optometrist, not optician. Get an eye examination, not an eye test, which often isn't thorough enough. Proper screening is important for glaucoma - the silent blinding disease."

"Reading vision can be corrected by laser eye surgery with blended vision, so no more need for reading glasses or bifocals which, of course, age your appearance."

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? "You may develop floaters, which are like flies crossing your vision, so a dilated pupil eye exam is very important," says Prof Reinstein. "Some may find their eyes getting drier."

What's not normal? Seeing flashes of light, irritated red eyes, straight lines appearing wavy.

Turn back the body clock: Your optometrist will check for any tear in the retina, screen for macular degeneration and advise on eyelid hygiene measures for dry, red eyes.

If you're 70+

What's normal? Dr Susan Blakeney, clinical adviser to the College of Optometrists explains: "It's common to have some cataract. They may make your vision a bit misty and you might feel more uncomfortable looking at headlights when driving."

What's not: If the mistiness in your eyes starts interfering with your vision.

Turn back the body clock: Dr Blakeney says: "Cataracts can also make you go more short-sighted, so go and see your optometrist if you notice any changes."

JOINTS

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal?

Sammy Margo, of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy says: "You might get some intermittent aches and pains, which may be exacerbated by overdoing an activity."

What's not?

Experiencing pain at rest and pain during movement that lasts longer than the movement itself.

Turn back the body clock: Sammy says: "Keep your weight well under control, as every pound you put on increases the load on some joints four-fold. Integrate physical activity into your day instead of being sedentary and hitting the gym at full pelt. Maintain good core stability with Pilates."

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? Sammy says: "Feeling aches and pains and hearing creaks in your joints is to be expected."

What's not? Experiencing prolonged pain, sharp pain, pins and needles, numbness or

having to take pills most days of the week to ease pain.

Turn back the body clock: "Consider a diet that might help you lose a couple of pounds," says Sammy. "Cut your exercise times into smaller chunks, so instead of 30 minutes a

day, do three 10-minute sessions."

If you're 70+

What's normal? Sammy explains: "Sometimes feeling more uncomfortable during some activities and having to ask for help doing things such as gardening, DIY or unloading the car boot is nothing to worry about."

What's not? Severe, sharp or shooting aches and pains, numbness and being stuck in one position.

Turn back the body clock: "Focus on things you can do and keep doing them," says Sammy. "Give attention to your balance. For example, stand on one leg with your eyes closed. Get on and off the floor as a form of exercise. Walk to buy a newspaper every day."

MEMORY

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal? Dr Graham Stokes, director of Dementia Care at Bupa, explains: "Having everyday memory lapses, like forgetting to buy an item at the supermarket or phone numbers happens to us all at this age."

"This worsens if you're very busy as you become distracted and don't have time to really drill information into your mind."

What's not? Forgetting where you live, the names of ordinary objects like cups, or who you are.

Turn back the body clock: Dr Stokes says: "Try to de-stress your life. Have a place for everything and don't say 'I'll do it in a minute', but do it now in case you forget."

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? "It can be harder to remember everyday things," says Dr Stokes. "As you reach your 70s you will start to

experience TOT phenomena - tip of the tongue phenomena, when you have to really concentrate to remember."

What's not? Not remembering who you are or where you are.

Turn back the body clock: Ensure you have



a healthy diet, as evidence increasingly shows a healthy heart and a healthy brain go hand in hand. Stay mentally active and do gentle exercise.

If you're 70+

What's normal? Dr Stokes says: "Expect to miss the odd appointment or forget someone's name by the time you turn 70."

What's not? Getting lost driving in familiar areas or forgetting regular routes. Your lack of memory starts causing dependency, disorientation or distress.

Turn back the body clock: Manage chronic health problems, as conditions such as diabetes and depression can affect memory. Stay socially engaged by having lots of company and conversation.

TEETH

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal? Head of the [London Tooth Wear Centre](#), Professor Andrew Eder, explains: "Some new decay, possibly bleeding or slightly receding gums, some early loss of enamel, mild sensitivity or slight discolouration is normal."

What's not? Loose or missing teeth, extensive decay, advanced gum recession, significant tooth wear and sensitivity.

How to get the years back? Have fillings or replacement fillings as necessary, hygiene treatment, good oral care such as flossing, regular mouth rinses.

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? "Occasional breaking of old fillings or teeth, more significant gum recession, loss of enamel and teeth wearing, increased sensitivity, more discolouration are to be expected," says Prof Eder.

What's not? Fillings regularly breaking or falling out, inflamed and bleeding gums with significant recession, aching jaw joints, concern over smiling and chewing as teeth are wearing.

Turn back the body clock: Prof Eder says: "Have larger fillings, root canal treatment and crowns as necessary, more regular hygiene treatment and good home care such as using small brushes between teeth and fluoride mouth rinse."

If you're 70+

What's normal? "Expect failing restorations, appearing longer in the tooth as gums recede further, gaps appearing between the teeth where the gum has shrunk, ongoing wear of enamel and dentine leaving sharp edges, significant discolouration," explains

Prof Eder.

What's not normal? Decay on the root surfaces, loose teeth, which may drift into a new position, dry mouth as a result of certain medicines or saliva gland problems.

Turn back the body clock: Use highly fluoridated toothpastes and mouthwashes, adhesive splints to stop teeth drifting and saliva substitutes. Alter medication.

FITNESS

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal? BBC Breakfast fitness expert Lucy Wyndham-Read explains: "Feeling a little more out of breath, depending on body weight and lifestyle happens to us all. However, you should be able to comfortably walk up three flights of stairs."

What's not? Struggling for breath after three flights of stairs, headaches and finding it hard to step down from a 2ft-high box.

Turn back the body clock: Our 30s is a great time to work on cardiovascular training to boost your metabolic rate and help stop middle-age spread. Our 40s is a good time to start resistance exercises that use your own body weight. These might include lunges, squats and press-ups to strengthen bones and prevent osteoporosis.

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? Lucy says: "Joints feel stiffer so we are not feeling as mobile and movement feels a little more restrictive."

What's not? Experiencing dizziness upon exertion or during exercise.

Turn back the body clock: Include walking in your daily activities as these sort of big dynamic movements help to keep all joints super flexible, reduce abdominal fat and prevent and reduce osteoarthritis.

If you're 70+

What's normal? Lucy says: "The body also slows down its production of synovial fluid, which is a bit like WD40 on a squeaky door handle, so we are more likely to crack, creak and feel joint discomfort."

What's not? Severe pain.

Turn back the body clock: Drink water every day, always aim to get between six and seven hours sleep a night, eat a healthy diet that is low in processed foods and make sure you exercise every day.

EARS

If you're 30 to 50

What's normal? "You should be hearing well with no symptoms," says Colin Campbell, professional services director for Hearcare.

What's not? Tinnitus, which is a ringing or buzzing in the ears. Turning the TV or radio up louder than family or friends find comfortable. Asking people to repeat themselves can also be a sign that you are losing your hearing.

Turn back the body clock: Protecting your hearing is vital, particularly in noisy places. Take care not to turn the volume up too loud on personal sound systems such as iPods, as this can damage hearing.

If you're 50 to 70

What's normal? "Some hearing deterioration is nothing to be particularly worried about," says Colin. "As we age, it becomes harder to hear speech when there is background noise, for example in pubs, restaurants and similar social settings."

What's not? Poor hearing is starting to have an effect on lifestyle, perhaps leading you to avoid situations where it is hard to hear.

Turn back the body clock: Get a hearing test as soon as possible. Hearing aids will help - leaving it alone will not.

If you're 70+

What's normal: "Some degree of hearing loss by this age is normal, as over 71% of people aged 70-plus have trouble hearing," says Colin.

Not normal: Ignoring hearing loss.

Turn back the body clock: Join the millions of people in the UK who use hearing aids, many of whom aren't deaf, but just want to make things clearer.

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