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What's normal aging...and what's not



Aging brings change. Some of it is expected and manageable; some of it deserves closer attention. Have you noticed slower recall, needing more light to read, or taking a little longer to recover from exercise? These are common, normal parts of aging. What's not normal? Changes such as getting lost in familiar places, poor balance, and difficulty managing everyday tasks. Knowing the difference is important.

Normal aging comes on gradually. You may notice that multitasking feels harder, names don't come as quickly, or your stamina isn't quite what it once was. At the same time, many core strengths remain stable or even improve. Thinking speed may slow, but judgment and life wisdom often deepen. Word finding can take longer, while vocabulary often remains strong. Physical energy may change, yet independence and the ability to manage daily life usually remain intact. These shifts reflect how the brain and body age, not a loss of ability.

Abnormal aging is different. When changes begin to interfere with everyday life, it's time to seek help. Forgetting recent events is not normal. Repeated falls, trouble with routine tasks or decisions, and difficulty with comprehension are also warning signs. A change from your usual personality or behavior is a red flag and should lead to a conversation with a healthcare professional.

Much of healthy aging is influenced by choices you make long before problems appear. Research shows that a few core practices help protect both brain and body over time, especially when they're sustained. These practices include the following:

- Regular medical care and monitoring of blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight
- Ongoing physical activity to support strength, balance, and mobility
- Nutritious eating patterns that support heart and brain health
- Mental and social engagement that keeps you connected and challenged

Your senses also change with age, especially hearing and vision. While these shifts are common, they shouldn't be dismissed. Untreated hearing or vision loss can affect safety, confidence, and social engagement. Proactive planning means routine screenings, using assistive devices when helpful, and adjusting your environment with better lighting, contrast, and sound support. These are practical adaptations, not signs of decline.

It's wise to think beyond daily habits. Prevention means planning for support before you need it. Ask yourself who would notice changes, who has permission to step in, and whether your legal, financial, and healthcare documents match how you live today. Conversations with estate-planning attorneys, financial advisors, and care-planning professionals help protect independence.

Looking for an ally in aging well? Give us a call at 206-456-5155.



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Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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