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Rapid Facial Aging

Have you ever found yourself staring into a mirror, noticing new creases and blotches, feeling suddenly years older, and wondering, "When did that happen?" The hormone changes that take place before and during menopause or after total hysterectomies can cause what seems to many women like rapid facial aging. Women see their skin become dryer, looser, and less rosy with the loss of the hormone balance of their younger years, and this can be very upsetting.

There are some steps you can take to try to slow the visible signs of aging in your face. You can ask your gynecologist if hormone replacement therapy might help, or you can consult with a dermatologist about beginning a daily skin regimen to maximize your skin's elasticity and health. Eating a balanced diet, taking vitamins, moisturizing regularly, and using sunscreen will also help to maintain the health and appearance of your face. Some women treat themselves to a makeover and a new hairstyle to update their look as well. There is nothing wrong with wanting to look younger and feel good about yourself, as long as you keep it in perspective. Remember that aging is natural, and the aging face is beautiful, too.

Take care of your face, but do not be ashamed of wrinkles and age spots. They are a sign of the battles you've won in life and the wisdom you've earned. It's a cliché, but beauty truly does shine from within, a projection of the optimism and confidence you feel about the many years you have ahead of you. Have you ever noticed how you rarely pay attention to the wrinkles on the face of a lovely older woman who takes care of herself and embraces her age with grace and a positive outlook? Though there are many products that can slow the appearance of aging in your skin, and you should certainly use them if they help improve your skin's health and your morale, perhaps the best ways to ward off the years are maintaining a youthful outlook, reducing stress as much as possible, and accepting the physical signs of aging as a new kind of beauty. In other words, work on keeping yourself mentally young as much as you work on keeping your skin looking young. Perhaps you could make meditation or a daily affirmation part of your routine. A positive, optimistic, energetic outlook on life will be what the world sees first, not a blemish or a crease that can never take away from the beauty of strong and confident woman.

Staying Mentally Young

Many women who begin to feel the first signs of “slowing down” want to know how to stay mentally young as their bodies become less able to keep up with all they want to do. Here are some suggestions from women 50 and older who feel successful in winning that battle:

- **Exercise often**—Exercise keeps your muscles more flexible and strong and helps to ward off aches and pains. It aids circulation and helps you sleep better at night. Though you may feel less like you want to get out and exercise as you age, it will actually keep you feeling younger if you stick to a routine. You might modify some of your activities, such as changing from step aerobics to water aerobics, but keep moving!
- **Try new things**—Many women say that exploring new, creative activities helps stimulate their minds and keeps them feeling positive and energetic. You might sign up for a class that you’ve always wanted to take, such as painting or photography, learn a programming language, volunteer with a nonprofit organization whose mission inspires you, etc. Keep learning and exploring, and your mind will stay agile and active longer.
- **Help others**—If you feel overwhelmed by health issues, loneliness, anxiety, or other negative aspects of getting older, don’t give up and withdraw. Reach out to others in a similar situation and realize that you still have much to give. Whether online or in person, you can help others by sharing the wisdom, experience, and love that is yours. Helping others always makes us feel better ourselves.
- **Keep a positive attitude**—It’s easier said than done, but it’s an important part of staying mentally young. Some women use meditation, yoga, prayer, or daily affirmations to pump up their good attitudes each day and to ward off stress and anxiety. Stress is a proven aging factor, so actively work to reduce stress in your life.

The Eyes Have It

Did you know that, along with normal aging, several gynecological conditions and surgeries can affect your eyes? For example, after menopause or a total hysterectomy that includes the removal of a woman's ovaries, the drop in hormone levels can cause dramatic changes in her vision prescription. Many women report getting dry eyes, becoming more nearsighted or farsighted, or needing bifocals within weeks or months of a total hysterectomy, or during perimenopause.

Optometrists confirm that hormones have an impact on vision, and they recommend regular (annual or biannual) eye checks for women approaching or in menopause or who experience gynecological conditions that affect hormone levels. They point out that, even if a patient has not experienced noticeable vision changes, an eye exam can reveal a great deal about overall health and might even uncover problems in their early stages. If you have had gynecological surgery and you experience mild vision changes after your procedure, you might hold off on your exam for a few weeks or months in order to allow your hormone levels to settle down a bit. Otherwise, you might find that your vision continues to change and you will need another new prescription sooner rather than later.

Remember, though, that vision changes are a normal part of aging. Starting at around 40, perhaps a bit earlier, many people lose elasticity in their eyes' lenses, meaning they cannot focus at close distances as well as they once could. This is when many women need bifocals or reading glasses to help them read or do other close-up activities. Bifocals have improved tremendously in recent years, and they no longer have a visible line across them; they look like regular lenses, and they can improve the quality of your vision tremendously. Don't put them off if you need them.