Some Common Changes as You Grow Older - Changes in Your Skin

The skin's aging process begins in our mid 20's. As we age, skin becomes less elastic, more fragile, drier, and develops age spots and skin tags. We can bruise more easily and new skin cells grow less rapidly.

Skin becomes drier. Dry skin can cause itchiness. Being dehydrated, too much sun exposure, smoking and stress can also cause itchy skin. Some things that can help include the use of moisturizers, a humidifier, and milder soaps. Bathing less often and using warm water instead of hot can also help.

"Age" spots develop. Age spots resemble a large freckle. They are light brown to very dark brown flat patches, usually found on your face, legs or feet. Using sunscreen when outdoors and avoiding excess sun exposure can decrease and even prevent the development of age spots.

The fat padding under skin, which protects blood vessels, is lost as we age. As a result, simple injuries such as bumping against a table can produce a bruise.

Aging skin can become more sensitive to fabrics, soaps and detergents. Wearing clothing with a lining and switching to soaps and detergents for 'sensitive' skin can help.

Smoking also causes skin changes. These include deep wrinkles, leathery skin and changes in your complexion.

Being in the sun for even a few minutes a day without sun protection can cause noticeable skin changes over the years. The most common skin changes include freckles, fine wrinkles, rough and leathery skin, and a blotchy complexion. You can also develop skin cancer.

It is never too late to protect your skin:

- Avoid deliberate tanning.
- Stay out of the sun between 10am and 4pm, when rays are the strongest.
- Wear a wide brimmed hat and long sleeves when outside in the sun.
- Use sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) year round. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply after swimming or sweating.

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