



Ageing in Two Sudden Jumps

New research suggests the human body does not grow old smoothly, but instead changes in two dramatic waves around the ages of forty-four and sixty.

Most of us imagine that ageing is a slow, smooth process. Year after year, we picture our bodies changing little by little, like a clock that never stops. But a surprising new study suggests that this picture may be wrong. According to researchers, the human body does not age at a steady speed at all. Instead, it seems to change in two sudden¹ bursts: one around the age of forty-four, and another at about sixty.

A team of scientists in California followed more than a hundred volunteers for several years. The volunteers gave regular blood samples, and the scientists measured thousands of tiny molecules inside their bodies. When they looked at the data, they found something they did not expect. The molecules did not change at the same rate across a lifetime. Most of the big changes happened during two short windows of time.

The first wave arrives in the mid-forties. At this stage, the body starts to process fat and alcohol differently. People may suddenly notice that they gain weight more easily, or that a glass of wine affects them more than before. Many of us also begin to develop² small aches in our joints and muscles³ around this age, even if we feel young in our minds.

The second wave hits at about sixty. This time, the changes are linked to the immune system, the way the body fights illness, and to how it controls sugar in the blood. This may help explain why the risk of certain diseases rises sharply

after this age. The pattern⁴ was clear and repeated across the whole group of volunteers.

Why does this matter for ordinary people? The answer is hopeful rather than frightening. If we know when these big changes are coming, we can prepare for them. Around the age of forty, for example, it makes sense to look closely at your diet⁵ and to drink less alcohol. As people approach sixty, regular exercise to protect the muscles and the heart becomes even more useful.

Of course, this research is still new, and the study followed a fairly small group of people. Scientists need to repeat the work with larger and more varied groups before they can be completely sure. The volunteers also lived in one part of the world, so the results might look slightly different elsewhere.

Even so, the message is powerful. Ageing may not be a smooth river that carries us gently downstream. It may be more like a staircase, with long flat steps and two sudden drops. We cannot stop time, and we cannot avoid growing older. But we can choose how we live during each decade of our lives.

Perhaps the most important result⁶ of this study is the way it changes how we think. Instead of treating ageing as one slow event, we can see it as a series of stages. Each stage brings its own challenges, but also its own chances to stay healthy, active, and strong for as long as possible.

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VOCABULARY — KEY WORDS FROM THE STORY

| # | WORD | DEFINITION | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | sudden <i>adjective</i> | happening quickly and without warning, when you did not expect it | "There was a sudden change in the weather, and the rain started before we could get home." |
| 2 | develop <i>verb</i> | to slowly start to have something, or to grow and become bigger or more advanced | "If you do not rest enough, you can develop bad sleeping habits over time." |
| 3 | muscle <i>noun</i> | one of the soft parts of the body that you use to move and to lift things | "After lifting heavy boxes all day, the muscles in my back felt very sore." |
| 4 | pattern <i>noun</i> | a way in which something happens or is repeated again and again in a regular way | "The doctor noticed a clear pattern: the patient always felt worse in the early morning." |
| 5 | diet <i>noun</i> | the kind of food and drink that a person usually has | "A healthy diet with plenty of vegetables can give you more energy during the day." |
| 6 | result <i>noun</i> | something that happens or is found because of an action, event, or study | "The results of the test showed that the new medicine worked very well." |

COMPREHENSION — ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

What is the main idea that the new study challenges?

- A-) The idea that exercise is good for older people
- B-) The idea that the body ages slowly and steadily over time
- C-) The idea that diet has no effect on health
- D-) The idea that scientists should test many volunteers

QUESTION 2 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

According to the article, what kind of change happens around the age of sixty?

- A-) The body finds it easier to process alcohol
- B-) People stop developing aches in their muscles
- C-) Changes are linked to the immune system and to sugar in the blood
- D-) The molecules in the body stop changing completely

QUESTION 3 — SHORT ANSWER

The writer says the news is 'hopeful rather than frightening'. Using your own words, explain why the writer takes this positive view.

COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

My score today ___ / 3

Q1 The idea that the body ages slowly and steadily over time ✓ Correct (B)

The opening paragraph says most of us 'imagine that ageing is a slow, smooth process' and that we picture our bodies 'changing little by little'. The study then 'suggests that this picture may be wrong' because the body changes in 'two sudden bursts'. The whole text is built around correcting this one belief, so this is the main idea being challenged.

Q2 Changes are linked to the immune system and to sugar in the blood ✓ Correct (C)

The paragraph about the second wave states that at about sixty 'the changes are linked to the immune system... and to how it controls sugar in the blood'. The other options describe the mid-forties wave (alcohol) or are not supported by the text (the body does not stop changing).

Q3 **Answer:** The writer feels positive because the study gives people useful knowledge instead of bad news. If we know that big changes are likely to come at about forty-four and sixty, we can get ready for them in advance. For example, we can pay more attention to our diet and drink less alcohol in our forties, and do more exercise to protect our muscles and heart as we get close to sixty. So the study does not just warn us about ageing; it gives us a chance to act early and stay healthier. That is why the writer sees it as hopeful rather than something to fear.

Explanation: A strong answer should explain the link between knowledge and action: knowing when changes happen allows people to prepare. It should include at least one concrete example from the text (diet, alcohol, or exercise) and show understanding that the writer focuses on what we can control. The answer must be in the student's own words, not copied sentences, and should show the contrast between 'frightening' (just bad news) and 'hopeful' (a chance to act).

VOCABULARY — TRANSLATION & NOTES

sudden

Often used before a noun: 'a sudden drop', 'a sudden noise', 'a sudden decision'. The adverb form is 'suddenly'.

develop

Common collocations: 'develop a habit', 'develop a skill', 'develop a problem'. Be careful with spelling: there is no 'e' at the end (develop, not 'develope').

muscle

The letter 'c' is silent, so it sounds like 'muss-el'. We often say 'build muscle' or 'pull a muscle' (hurt it).

pattern

Useful in science and data: 'follow a pattern', 'notice a pattern', 'a regular pattern'. It can also mean a repeated design on cloth or paper.

diet

Two common meanings: your normal eating (a 'healthy diet') or eating less to lose weight ('go on a diet'). Collocations: 'a balanced diet', 'a poor diet'.

result

Often plural in science: 'the results of the study'. The phrase 'as a result' means 'because of this'. Verb form: 'result in' (lead to).

YOUR TURN — SENTENCE BUILDING

Mastery comes from practice. Write original sentences using today's target vocabulary.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

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