

Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

Theory

1. List three stages of adulthood.
2. Explain Schaie's theory of cognitive development in young and middle adults.
3. Discuss Erikson's stages of psychosocial development in young and middle adults.
4. List at least three functions of families.
5. Describe the effects of divorce on involved persons.
6. Describe the physical and psychosocial development and changes of young and middle adults.

Clinical Practice

1. Design an educational program to help adults maintain a healthy lifestyle.
2. Identify at least three health concerns of young adults.
3. Identify at least four health concerns of middle adults.
4. Explain how caring people can nourish the cognitive and psychosocial development of adults.

Key Terms

achievement stage (p. 152)

andropause (p. 159)

baby boomers (p. 158)

boomerang children (BŪ-mēr-äng, p. 156)

career (p. 153)

empty nest syndrome (SĪN-drōm, p. 160)

executive substage (ĕx-Ē-kĕw-tĭv, p. 153)

family-centered care (p. 153)

generativity (jĕn-ĕr-ă-Tĭ-vĭ-tĕ, p. 153)

intimacy (ĭN-tĭ-mă-sĕ, p. 153)

maturity (mă-TŪR-ĭ-tĕ, p. 154)

menopause (MĒ-nō-păwz, p. 159)

mentors (p. 161)

presbycusis (prĕz-bĕ-KŪ-sĭs, p. 158)

presbyopia (prĕz-bĕ-Ō-pĕ-ă, p. 158)

responsibility stage (rĕ-spōn-sĭ-Bĭ-lĭ-tĕ, p. 153)

sandwich generation (p. 161)

stagnation (stăg-NĀ-shŭn, p. 153)

vocational (p. 156)

ADULTHOOD AS CONTINUING CHANGE

Adulthood usually begins at age 18 years, although people may continue adolescent behaviors into their 20s. Adults continue to grow and develop throughout the life span. As the body continues to change with age, it becomes increasingly susceptible to health disorders and the person must work harder to maintain health. Thinking patterns and life goals also change as the person acquires more life experiences.

Erik Erikson describes three stages of adulthood. The first stage is young adulthood, ages 18 to 35 years. The second stage is middle adulthood, ages 35 to 65 years. Older adulthood is the third stage, starting at age 65 to death. As with younger people, the age ranges should be regarded as flexible when considering an individual.

THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

SCHAIIE'S THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Piaget thought that adolescents and adults think in the same ways (see Chapter 11). Contemporary theorists, on the other hand, believe that formal operational thinking becomes more refined during adulthood. Several stages of cognitive development in adults were identified and defined by K. Warner Schaie, who expanded on Piaget's ideas.

Schaie called the young adult stage of cognitive development the **achievement stage** (needing to learn and successfully use your abilities). He believed that young adults are optimistic and strive to improve themselves. They want to apply what they have learned, continue to learn, prove their competence,

4. The purpose of play during infancy is to:
 1. aid exploration of the environment.
 2. promote toilet training.
 3. generate self-discipline.
 4. promote brain development.
5. The single most important factor in maintaining a healthy pregnancy is:
 1. early and regular prenatal care.
 2. prepregnancy nutritional status.
 3. occasional checkups with an obstetrician.
 4. a strong desire to do the right thing for the baby.
6. Which adolescent is an example of a current trend?
 1. Marty, a high school athlete, is taking his grandmother's Vicodin to self-treat a recent back injury.
 2. Alison, a 16-year-old, is expecting a baby in 2 months.
 3. Leo, a 17-year-old high school student, has withdrawn from school since he is in the end stages of AIDS.
 4. Jill, a high school senior, has begun taking amphetamines to help increase her study time.
7. Bonding is necessary for the child to develop:
 1. appropriate personal boundaries.
 2. a sense of security.
 3. eventual independence.
 4. a sense of trust.
8. Parents of children ages 3 to 6 years may need guidance in:
 1. making the child feel secure when a newborn arrives.
 2. helping the child cope with peers.
 3. methods of toilet training that are effective.
 4. allowing the child to make more of his own decisions.
9. A parent who insists that the child stay in his room for the full 4-minute time-out and then smiles and hugs the child when the time is up is showing a parenting style that is:
 1. authoritative.
 2. passive.
 3. authoritarian.
 4. punitive.
10. Growth and development should be monitored regularly for every child to:
 1. provide statistics needed for proper research.
 2. detect abnormal growth patterns so that early care and treatment of problems can begin.
 3. provide data to establish norms for growth and development at various ages.
 4. reassure parents that their children are healthy.
11. An effective discipline measure for an adolescent is: *(Select all that apply.)*
 1. restricting social activities for a limited time.
 2. grounding them to the house for several weeks.
 3. assigning extra chores.
 4. fining them a portion of their allowance.
 5. taking away the cell phone for 1 week.
12. Egocentrism as a characteristic of adolescence is displayed by the teen thinking that:
 1. parents have to be obeyed only when it is convenient.
 2. no one has ever experienced a big disappointment like what just happened to him.
 3. his peers are much smarter than his parents.
 4. he can visualize a world in the future that will be far better than the world now.
13. The adolescent who is thinking in logical and abstract ways as he completes a term paper shows:
 1. aspects of industry.
 2. identity confusion.
 3. appropriate cognitive development.
 4. appropriate psychosocial development.

Critical Thinking Activities

Read each clinical scenario and discuss the questions with your classmates.

Scenario A

A single mother whose 7-year-old daughter has a bad cold brings the child to the clinic where you are working. The child is smaller than average. As you interview them, you learn that because of the mother's work schedule, the girl is home alone every school morning for 2 hours and does not always eat breakfast. What concerns about this situation might you have?

Scenario B

The math teacher at the high school told the parents of 17-year-old John that he is surly in class, falls asleep often, does not consistently hand in homework, and made a D on the last test. John's mother has asked you what to do. When she tried to talk with John, he became sarcastic and walked out. John has a part-time job at a local fast-food restaurant.

and increase their **career** (work that requires specific training) choices.

The **responsibility stage** (concerned with real-life problems; being in charge of self and others) occurs in middle adulthood. At this stage adults are responsible for themselves, a job, often a family, and perhaps some aspect of the community. This includes attention to the needs of a spouse, children, co-workers, and others.

For some middle adults, Schaie identified the **executive substage** (being responsible for major corporations, the country). He states that many middle adults with multiple responsibilities learn to function as executives in their lives. They delegate appropriately, juggle roles, and manage complex situations.

ERIKSON'S STAGES OF ADULT PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Erikson called the young adult stage **intimacy** versus isolation. Intimacy refers to close, meaningful relationships. Young adults want to give of themselves and to be committed to others. They establish intimate, intense relationships with other people. Maintaining close family ties is another positive example.

Generativity (guiding the lives of the next generation) versus **stagnation** (inactivity, self-absorption) is the psychosocial stage of development seen in middle adults. Many are willing and eager to help young members of their family or community. Middle adults are productive people who accept the interdependence necessary for satisfactory living. People who are stagnant may have trouble keeping a job, are not interested in volunteering, and are self-involved.

FAMILIES

Because people are social beings, one cannot study an individual's development without knowing about the family environment that influences it. **Family** is defined as a group of individuals who care about and for each other (Figure 12-1).

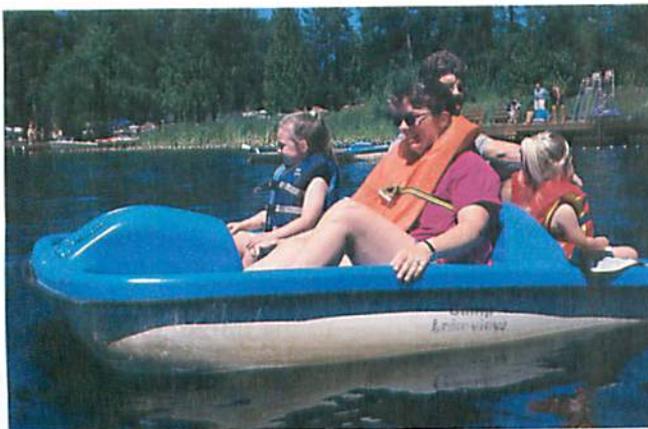


FIGURE 12-1 Exercising together helps keep everyone healthy.

Families provide an important environment for children to learn basic values and how to relate to other people. Functions of families are listed in Box 12-1. A family's cultural and ethnic background also influences children. **The family's support remains important throughout life.** In the health care setting, **family-centered care** is an important concept. Family members are considered more than visitors; health care providers share important information, as appropriate (but not in violation of HIPAA), and make decisions with the patient's best interest in mind.

TYPES OF FAMILIES

There have always been different kinds of families, but awareness of differences is greater now than it was in the past. Some types of families are defined in Box 12-2.

? Think Critically

What kind of family did you have as a child? Did you ever wish it were different? What kind of family do you have now?

Box 12-1 Functions of the Family

- **Physical maintenance:** Providing essentials for life
- **Protection:** Creating an atmosphere for health and safety
- **Nurturance:** Providing loving care and guidance
- **Socialization:** Interacting appropriately with others
- **Education:** Teaching about values and the world
- **Reproduction:** Continuing the species
- **Recreation:** Having fun together
- **Support:** Helping and caring for each other

Box 12-2 Types of Families

- **Nuclear:** One or two parents and child(ren).
- **Extended:** Parent(s), child(ren), grandparent(s), and other relatives.
- **Step:** One parent and child(ren) and a new parent.
- **Blended:** Mom and her children, dad and his children.
- **Single parent:** Woman or man in separate household with child(ren) as a result of divorce, death, desertion, or individual preference.
- **Partner:** Parents of the same gender. Children are from previous relationships, artificial insemination, or adopted.
- **Cohabitation:** Couples who live together with their children but remain unmarried.
- **Foster parent:** Temporary adult caregiver(s) providing for child(ren)'s care, while waiting for child to be adopted or for natural parent situation to improve.
- **Adopted:** Caregiver(s) obtaining legal guardianship over children and becoming parent(s). Grandparents may adopt grandchildren if young parents are not able to provide for their care, or couples unable to conceive may adopt children.

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN FAMILIES

Sociologists have identified many changes in family life in the past 50 years. Varieties of families are one example. Other changes include the following:

- **Urbanization:** Rural families of the past were more self-sufficient than today's city dwellers. Only a small percentage of the population now lives on farms.
- **Mobility:** Many families do not stay in one community, usually because of a changing job market. Some children attend four or five schools before they finish high school. This also affects relationships among the extended family.
- **Size:** The average size of families is decreasing. As living expenses increase, people realize they can't afford as many children as their parents or grandparents did.
- **Use of paid caregivers:** Most two-parent families have two or more wage earners. Most single parents are employed. Children are cared for by others for part of every workday.
- **Fathers' roles:** Since the 1980s, men are taking a greater role in their children's lives. Whether married or single, many men enjoy participating in child care. It is also more common for single fathers to be custodial parents than it was in earlier decades.
- **Increased longevity:** Health care advances contribute to longer life spans. Some families have four or five living generations.

DIVORCE AND FAMILIES

Divorce or permanent separation ends nearly 50% of marriages, according to 2010 National Center for Family and Marriage Research statistics (Amato, 2010). People expect a great deal from marriage; partners expect each other to be best friends, confidantes, and perfect lovers. Some factors that increase the risk of divorce are listed in Box 12-3.

Divorce early in a marriage, especially before there are children, may seem the least harmful. However, the people involved may be deeply affected. There may have been abuse or infidelity. Often, counseling is necessary for a person ending a difficult relationship.

Divorce can be harder on children than it is on their parents. Young children may think they are to blame for the family breakup; they often harbor guilt and may fantasize about reuniting the family.

Older children and adolescents can sometimes understand that their parents' marital problems are not their fault, but they are still affected by the divorce. It may influence the way they relate to other people, especially as they begin dating, and may affect their ability to trust others.

Some couples discover that they have little in common after their children are grown, and they may

Box 12-3 Risk Factors for Divorce

- Bride and groom younger than 20
- Lower economic status
- Cohabitation before marriage
- Premarital pregnancy
- Having children from a previous marriage
- Either partner having been previously divorced
- Knowing each other for only a short time before marriage
- One or both not finishing high school
- No religious affiliation or practicing different faiths
- One or both having divorced parents

divorce at that point. The adult children often have trouble understanding why this happens.

Divorce also affects the parents and other relatives of the divorcing couple. Sometimes grandparents lose opportunities to be with their grandchildren. The increasing incidence of divorce in the latter half of the 20th century is viewed as a major cause of poverty because so many divorced women have low incomes. **Divorce occurs between two people, but the effects ripple into their extended families and their community.**

YOUNG ADULTS

The decade after high school is a time of transition for young people. Most are completing adolescent developmental processes and moving into the roles and responsibilities of young adults. Several major events usually occur during this time. Decisions young adults make during these years influence the rest of their lives.

In our culture, two significant milestones signal young adulthood. The first is **economic independence**, which usually happens when a person is employed full time. Many young people in college or technical education programs cannot reach this milestone until later. The second is **independent decision making**.

Some theorists say that **maturity** (being fully developed) is a significant marker of reaching adulthood. It is probably more accurate to say that we are all growing toward maturity. **Mature people have established a philosophy of life based on their own belief system and personal ethics** (Box 12-4).

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Most young adults are physically at their peak. Their strength, endurance, and energy are at high levels. Most report their general health as good; few have chronic health concerns. Young adults usually have fewer colds and minor illnesses than when they were children. Good physical health at age 30 is considered an indicator of good physical health in later years as well.

Box 12-4 Behaviors Indicating Maturity*The ability to:*

- Acknowledge and express feelings with restraint
- Laugh at yourself
- Accept responsibility for your own actions
- Tolerate frustration
- Accept diversity and individuality in others
- Trust others
- Display self-confidence
- Cope with stress
- Discipline yourself
- Handle problems without losing sight of goals

Patient Teaching**Health Habits for Young Adults**

Provide health teaching to young adults on the following topics:

- Developing healthy dietary and exercise habits to promote a healthy weight.
- Exercising to increase endurance, strength, flexibility, and muscle tone. The U.S. government recommends a weekly routine of 75 minutes of vigorously intense aerobic activity, OR 150 minutes of moderately intense aerobic activity, OR an equivalent mix of moderately and vigorously intense aerobic activity, PLUS twice a week performing muscle-strengthening activities that work all major muscle groups.
- Maintaining weight within normal limits and reducing fat to less than 30% of calories.
- Recognizing that muscle development and fat accumulation contribute to changes in body shape.

Skeletal development is completed when young adults reach their full stature. For women this often occurs by age 18 or 19; men can continue to grow until their later 20s. The physical differences between men and women are significant. Generally men are taller, heavier, and stronger than women. They have broader shoulders, narrower hips, and larger hands and feet.

Dental maturity is achieved with the eruption of wisdom teeth. Regular dental care is important to maintain healthy teeth and gums.

Physical growth of the brain continues into the mid-20s, peaking during these years, and memory is acute, making learning easier. Growth of neural connections continues into later years. Middle and older adults continue to learn but often at a slower pace.

The ages of 19 to 26 are physically the best years for reproduction. Many young adults choose to delay childbearing until they are economically and emotionally prepared for parenting.

The validity of studies about sexual behavior is often questioned because the results are based on self-reporting. During young adulthood, sexual preferences

are identified and there may be numerous partners. Promiscuity increases the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV infection.

HEALTH CONCERNS OF YOUNG ADULTS**Risky Behavior**

Because young adults are generally healthy and feel well, they may feel invincible and engage in risky behaviors, such as chemical abuse, overeating, inadequate sleep, an inactive lifestyle, and sexual promiscuity. Abuse of chemicals often contributes to other risky behavior.

Young adults die primarily because of accidents, homicide, or suicide. Accidents are the primary cause of death for white males; homicide is the leading cause of death for African American males.

Stress-Related Illness

Young adults over age 30 begin to be affected by stress-related illnesses such as headaches, gastric ulcers, and hypertension. The incidence of these conditions increases as people get older. People may use alcohol or other drugs in unhealthy attempts to relieve stress.

Early Disease

The third health concern for young adults is development of diseases, especially cancer. Women should have annual pelvic examinations, including a periodic Papanicolaou (Pap) smear to screen for cervical cancer. Young women should learn to examine their breasts and perform monthly breast self-examinations. They should see a physician if they find any changes. According to the American Cancer Society (2011), women in their 20s and 30s should have a breast examination every 3 years by a health care provider and a screening mammogram annually starting at age 40. Women determined to be at high risk for breast cancer should have annual mammograms and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans beginning as early as age 30 (American Cancer Society, 2011).

Some physicians recommend that young men learn how to perform monthly self-examination of the testicles beginning at age 15. They should see a physician if they detect any growths or changes.

Both men and women should have annual physical examinations to screen for cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol and to assess weight management (Figure 12-2). Periodic Mantoux tests are advised to screen for tuberculosis. Immunizations should be kept current.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

In the achievement stage of Schaie's theory, young adults apply their intelligence to higher education and to early career development. Young adults are no longer egocentric. They are more able to reason, solve problems, and set reasonable goals.



FIGURE 12-2 Regular physical checkups monitor health status.

Patient Teaching

Teaching Young Adults

Keep in mind the following points when teaching young adults:

- Build on previous knowledge and skills.
- Make the goals of teaching clear.
- Indicate how the new knowledge can be applied and how it is of personal benefit.
- Use interactive, problem-oriented methods that relate to daily tasks at home, work, or school.

Cognitive development of young adults is aided by the support of others. Young adults may need guidance to identify their goals clearly and continue striving toward them.

Continuing Education

Many young adults continue their education after high school. Higher education can help people understand their world, learn to manage their time, and prepare for a career.

It is generally believed that 1 or 2 years of higher education, even if career goals are unclear, can help young adults learn more about themselves and the world. For those who do not want to continue school beyond high school, many careers are best learned on the job or in vocational/technical schools.

Careers and Work

The ability to earn a living is an important accomplishment of young adulthood. Working provides the means of personal, social, and financial survival. It can also give someone a sense of identity and increase self-worth and respect. Some view their work as a service to others.

Exploration of **vocational** (trade, profession, or occupation) choices is expected in late adolescence and early adulthood. Some counselors encourage young

adults to try several kinds of jobs to determine what type of work might provide the most satisfaction. It is common for individuals to have up to seven different jobs throughout their work life. Disillusionment about the ideal job is frequent as realities of the work world are identified.

Think Critically

How many kinds of jobs have you had? Why have you left jobs in the past? What are you looking for in a career? How is a career different from a job?

What do young adults want from their work? Adequate money must be considered, but it is not always most important; the priority is finding interesting work. They also want the opportunity to use their skills and abilities, and a chance for advancement.

Unemployment can be the result of many factors but is often viewed as personal failure, even if it is the result of a weak economy. In tough economic times, even jobs that are historically plentiful, like nursing, can be difficult to find. Prolonged and unwanted unemployment can cause financial crisis, loss of self-esteem, and depression.

The roles of employed women in the United States continue to stimulate discussion. **Gender equality** is the movement for equal opportunity and equal pay for women and men. Young women often have a dilemma when choosing a type of work. Some may prefer to be full-time homemakers and mothers. That option may be impossible because of the economic pressures facing young families.

Concerns about career versus family may cause personal or family conflict. Family-friendly employment policies benefit both women and men. The kinds of work available to women remain restricted in some fields. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) stated that the average weekly earning power of women overall in 2009 was about 80% of what men earn in similar work.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Independence from the parental family is a primary achievement during young adulthood. This is interpreted as living on your own and making your own decisions. The trend toward young adults being **boomerang children** (children who return to the parental home for a period of time) has grown considerably as children find it difficult to make sufficient money to establish a home of their own. Sometimes returning young adults bring their children along, commonly due to economic hardship.

Erikson called the young adult stage of psychosocial development **intimacy versus isolation**. It is important that people continue the development of meaningful relationships with others. If this task of developing intimacy is not accomplished, the young

adult might not trust others and may be hesitant to develop close relationships. This could lead to withdrawal and depression.

According to Erikson, adolescents should find identity, which helps them become more independent. Independence precedes the need for developing intimacy and sometimes may conflict with it. A secure and independent person is ready to be intimate with another and can allow the other person to be independent.

Personality development continues throughout the life span. Most theorists agree that your early life is significant in forming your basic personality. Major personality changes in adulthood are not likely to occur. The person who is usually happy will remain so; the opposite is also true. **Changes that a person wants to make require self-analysis and a lot of work.**

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Marriage

Deciding whether to marry is a major concern in young adulthood. Ninety percent of Americans do eventually try marriage. The average age at first marriage is 27 for women and 29 for men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012). These ages are increasing as more people choose to delay marriage, often for higher education. Selection of a marriage partner is a critical decision; there are no foolproof rules for mate selection. **Although opposites may attract, successful marriages often involve partners who share basic values and philosophies about life.** Young love is romantic and intense. Marriage requires mutual respect, sharing, and commitment. The fear of making a poor choice is one reason people decide to cohabit before or instead of marrying. Married people are generally healthier and happier throughout their lives.

Single adults include those who have never been married and those who are widowed, separated, or divorced. In the United States people who live alone make up approximately 28% of U.S. households (Kleinenberg, 2012), an increase from previous years. Many singles live full, happy lives. There are positive and negative aspects to living alone. Single people can be independent with their time and money; they don't have to be concerned about a partner's ideas or desires. However, they have no one to depend on when trouble occurs. They have to be responsible for their own decisions. Many single adults report that they are often lonely.

Think Critically

What are some of the challenges facing a young adult who is also a single parent? What kinds of guidance might be needed from a health care provider?

Parenting

Many people become parents during young adulthood. Some couples carefully discuss and plan decisions

about having children. Others choose not to use birth control measures. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the average age of first-time mothers is 25 (Family Facts, 2011).

Some women delay having children in favor of career development. They might then have trouble with conceiving after age 30 as fertility declines. The option of in vitro fertilization is available but expensive. By age 40, a woman is statistically a high-risk pregnancy. Technological developments have made it possible for some women to become pregnant into their 50s. **Childbearing, however, is only the beginning of parenting.** The issues of day care, discipline, and other child-rearing decisions continue for years. Most people learn about parenting from the examples seen in childhood.

Think Critically

If you have a child, are you aware of your parenting style? Is it similar to or different from the way your parents raised you? If you do not have a child, what kind of parent do you think you would be? Would you want to use the model of your parents?

In the past, young families were often geographically near older relatives and had the emotional support of extended family. Many young families today don't live near other family members and may struggle with child-rearing issues. Some areas have developed Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) programs through schools or community organizations where young adults can share concerns and learn about successful parenting. Tips and resources are also available for parents coping with the challenges of raising adolescents. 

Home Management

The tasks involved in making life run smoothly need regular attention. Having groceries on hand, keeping the house in order, managing money, doing laundry, having the oil changed in the car, and cleaning the refrigerator are examples of tasks involved in home management.

Developing a Social Group

Having friends who share values is vital for socialization. Friendships beyond the extended family are valuable. For young adults, this can be a challenge when they go away to school or take a job in a new locale. They may have always lived in one area until this stage, and now have to make new friends in a different part of the world. Young adults who are confident, outgoing, and willing to be active in their community have a good chance of succeeding.

Community Responsibility

Beginning involvement in community affairs is another mark of young adulthood, as people begin to think

about the world beyond their family. Examples of this include joining a service organization, being involved in a religious community, or becoming active in local government. Young adults with healthy psychosocial development begin to reach beyond their own needs to be concerned with others. Sharing your expertise by volunteering is good for society as a whole.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Middle adulthood is from ages 46 to 64. Middle adults are often viewed as in the best years of their life, the wise, powerful leaders. However, stereotypes about people growing older begin to appear: life is “downhill” and unhappy. Some people are reluctant to admit they are middle aged because of such negative views. These can be challenging years, too, as people expand their personal and social involvement.

The oldest **baby boomers** (people born between 1946 and 1964) reached middle age in the 1990s. This large group of people (estimated at 79 million) has had a major impact on U.S. society at every stage of their development. They have challenged traditional beliefs and forged new ways of thinking about and living at every developmental stage.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical changes begin to appear during the middle years of life, and some people seek ways to slow the aging process. **The rate of change, even changes of aging, varies among individuals.** Not every person will experience every change; most changes occur so gradually that they may be unnoticed for years. Individuals who exercise regularly, eat sensibly, and take care of their bodies can often delay some of these changes.

Complementary & Alternative Therapies

Herbs and Supplements to Help Slow Various Problems of Aging

- **Black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*):** To lessen signs and symptoms of menopause
- **Garlic (*Allium sativum*):** To reduce blood pressure and cholesterol and to prevent blood clots
- **Vitamin E:** To possibly prevent or slow dementia; may help prevent heart attacks
- **Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate:** To help maintain cartilage and decrease arthritis
- **Evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*):** To treat signs and symptoms of dry skin and menopause
- **Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*):** To improve blood flow to the brain and decrease forgetfulness

These remedies have been used for the various problems, but are not Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved. They may work in some patients, but not others, and can also interact with many prescription medications.

During the middle adult years there is a natural redistribution of body weight, which changes the contours of the body, even if weight remains fairly constant. Men commonly add inches around the waist as body fat increases by about 30%. Women’s body fat increases by nearly 40% and is often added to hips and thighs. It becomes more difficult to lose weight.

One common occurrence is **presbyopia** (decreased flexibility of the eye lens). This makes near vision more difficult, leading to the need for reading glasses. By age 60, some people may have retinal damage because of lessened blood flow, leading to visual problems. Cataracts may develop during the middle years. Regular eye examinations and the use of corrective lenses can help maintain vision.

Presbycusis (loss of hearing) begins in early adulthood, but rarely becomes apparent until later. The ability to hear higher-pitched sounds is lost earlier than the ability to hear lower sounds. Men seem to lose this sense at younger ages than women. **Noisy work settings and loud music can contribute to eventual hearing loss by damaging auditory nerve endings.**

Health Promotion

Hearing Loss in Middle Adults

- The person who thinks hearing acuity is decreasing should have the hearing tested.
- It is much easier to adapt to a hearing aid when hearing loss is in the early stages.

Health Promotion

Bone Health in Middle Adults

- Women with a family history of osteoporosis should begin regular bone density screening at age 45.
- Anyone who has experienced a loss of height of 2 inches since age 20 should be screened for osteoporosis.
- Women should consume 1000 mg of calcium each day, increasing it to 1200 mg/day after age 50; men should consume 1000 mg of calcium each day, increasing it to 1200 mg/day after age 70 (Institute of Medicine and the National Academies, 2010).
- Obtaining sufficient vitamin D from sunlight or supplementation is also important.
- Assessment of hormone levels in aging women and men can aid in finding interventions to improve quality of life during menopause and andropause.

Gradual compression of the spinal column occurs as intervertebral disks shrink; this can cause the loss of up to 1 inch of height by age 60.

Muscles throughout the body lose tone and elasticity during these middle years. Fatigue arrives earlier with physical labor. Reaction time may also slow. Muscle changes also affect internal muscles; heart and lungs become less efficient. Blood pressure increases

when arteries become less elastic. The skin becomes less resilient, and wrinkles appear. Changes in the muscles of the digestive system may cause disturbances and food intolerances.

Many people in middle age begin to have graying hair. Thinning of scalp hair can occur in both genders. Increased hair growth in men is seen in bushier eyebrows and hair occasionally in noses and ears. These changes may be hereditary.

Both males and females produce sex hormones. Women produce greater amounts of estrogens, and men produce greater amounts of testosterone. As middle age proceeds, this balance shifts slightly. This is most obvious in women; the decrease in estrogen production in the mid to late 40s causes menstrual changes and eventually **menopause** (cessation of menstruation). The average age of menopause is 51. This ends the reproductive years and may be accompanied by minor physical and psychological signs and symptoms (Box 12-5). Some women see menopause as a natural event and the beginning of new freedoms and choices; other women have a negative view. Women can learn about their bodies and the natural changes from a variety of sources. They can discuss their feelings with others to better understand and cope. Many women seek new ways to contribute to their profession or their community.

The shift in hormone balance also occurs in men, but more gradually. Symptoms of male **andropause** (low testosterone levels) may include loss of muscle strength, decreased bone density, fatigue, reduced libido, depression, fatigue, and mood changes. A blood test of hormone levels can determine whether testosterone replacement therapy should be considered. Sexual ability does not decline in either sex.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Health status becomes a greater concern in middle adulthood. Lifestyle, heredity, and use of the health care system are major influences on the state of health. People who make efforts to take care of themselves are generally healthier than those who do not. This includes controlling one's diet and remaining physically active. Health screening for diabetes, risk factors for heart disease, hypertension, and colon cancer should occur at regular intervals.

Box 12-5

Signs and Symptoms Occurring with Menopause

- Decreased vaginal lubrication
- Emotional lability
- Fatigue
- Flushing and hot flashes with heavy sweating
- Headache
- Heart palpitations
- Insomnia



Health Promotion

Blood Pressure Control in Middle Adults.

Adults should keep their blood pressure within the normal range of 110/70 to 120/80 mm Hg—ideally closer to 110/70—by:

- Decreasing sodium intake
- Drinking minimal alcohol
- Participating in regular aerobic exercise

Leading causes of death in the 50s and 60s are heart disease, cancer, vascular disease, and accidents. The major health problems of middle adults include accidents, alcohol abuse, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and mental illness. Healthy stress management at all ages contributes to improved general health.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Schaie's stage of responsibility is seen as middle adults manage the complexities of their lives. Studies show that, despite many variations of peak and decline, intellect generally remains stable in middle adulthood (Schaie, 1996). Early signs of illnesses may cause the impression of slight mental decline. People who are active and use their intellect remain bright and interested in life.

Creativity is believed to peak during middle adulthood. However, many people are creative and productive in their older years as well. Creative people are often creative throughout their lives. Men and women are equally creative and intelligent.

One aspect of cognition that may change in midlife is memory. Middle adults often need to work harder at remembering things, and many find lists and notes helpful. Older people should not be overly concerned about forgetfulness; it is more likely related to a busy life than to cognitive problems.



Health Promotion

Cognitive Stimulation in Middle Adults

Working crossword or Sudoku puzzles, working jigsaw puzzles, playing bridge, playing board games that require strategy, studying some new subject, using computer programs such as "Brain Age," and other activities that stimulate the mind all help maintain mental crispness.

Work Life

Satisfaction with work is a part of cognitive development. It increases throughout life for most men and women. Many people spend more time in work-related activities during the middle years. Increased income and responsibilities accompanying career growth explain increased satisfaction. Most career advancement occurs during the 50s.

Middle adults may make a conscious decision to make a midlife career change. Some begin evaluating their desires and accomplishments. If a dream is unfulfilled, perhaps a change will help it come true. Middle adults begin to realize that their own life spans are limited and may want to try new areas of interest while they have time. Some adults are willing to change their lives entirely by starting a new career. Midlife changes are handled best when the person has a good support system.

Some middle adults are forced to change careers because of labor market demands, and they may have a difficult time adjusting. Job loss resulting from downsizing, and the need for retraining, are serious concerns. Changes in technology may create new work opportunities for some or take opportunities away from others.

Think Critically

Do you know anyone who has made a midlife career change? Was it by choice? Was the result satisfactory?

People often choose a career path with the hope and expectation of advancement and promotion in their fields. In recent decades it has become more common for women to take advantage of numerous career choices perceived to be unavailable to their mothers and grandmothers. Although women's earning power still lags behind men's, women who choose not to have children enjoy nearly the same career advancement as men (Leonhardt, 2010). Both women and men who choose to place family concerns ahead of career goals may find their career advancement is slowed.

Many baby boomers are finding that as retirement age approaches, they do not have the financial reserves necessary to support themselves and must continue working. Some do retire, run short of money, and have to reenter the job market.

The use of leisure time is also important. Middle adults should develop interests outside their work. Leisure activities can be healthy ways to reduce stress. Hobbies can also help people prepare for retirement by providing fulfillment.

Lifelong Learning

Many adults discover that returning to college is rewarding and challenging. They may enroll in one or two classes or may undertake an entire program of study. This may fulfill a lifelong goal, it may be necessary to keep a job, or it may help them prepare for a career change.

Women who chose to raise a family before developing a career are especially likely to prepare for new jobs and new lives in midlife. Rather than think of this stage as downhill, they think of it as an opportunity to try another path.

Think Critically

Do you know anyone who returned to or began college after the age of 40? How did they feel about it? What kind of support did they need?

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Relationships with other people remain the focus of psychosocial development in middle adults. People in these years also begin to think more globally about life and their roles.

Marriage

The marital relationship often grows from romance and passion into the affectionate love of middle adults. The steady companionship of a partner is important for social and psychological support. Some marriages improve as children leave home and child-rearing responsibilities lessen. Couples may find more time for each other. It is vital that they have and develop mutual interests and activities.

A couple who has been unhappy for years may decide to divorce when the children are gone. A woman who had been at home when children were younger may discover a new world if she begins a job or returns to school. Changing roles and responsibilities can create or intensify marital problems.

The **empty nest syndrome** (children have left home, causing a sense of loss) affects some middle adults who have centered their lives on their children. They may need guidance in finding additional interests. Conversely, many adults look forward to more freedom when children are no longer dependent on them.

Friendships

Whether single or married, middle adults need to have close friends. Friendships that have endured for years continue to be vital. Many middle adults find new importance in relationships with siblings. Friends and siblings find more time for each other once the time-consuming work of parenting is past.

Parenting

Most studies of middle adults involve those whose children are leaving or have left the parental home. Couples who had children later in life will enter midlife with children who are younger. Therefore parenting concerns vary.

Those with adult children can find this stage rewarding. Parents gain satisfaction in realizing that their child is a responsible young adult. If grandchildren arrive in the family, another dimension is added. Grandparents usually enjoy baby-sitting at times and inclusion in the younger family's life (Figure 12-3).



FIGURE 12-3 Family gatherings contribute to our sense of belonging.

Caring for Parents

The relationship with aging parents is another concern in midlife. If the relationship has been mutually supportive, these can be satisfying years. As adults mature, they may become more appreciative of the struggles their own parents experienced. Family dynamics may improve as children realize the sacrifices and guidance their parents provided.

Some middle adults find themselves in the **sandwich generation** (dependent children at home, dependent elders needing care). As longevity increases, older adults may need assistance and support. Daughters and daughters-in-law often become primary caregivers for elderly parents.

Caring for aging parents can be stressful when combined with personal careers and family responsibilities. Families must make important decisions. Open communication within the family can ease the adjustments. Community resources are available to assist families who need support and help with caregiving.

Generativity

Erikson's middle adult psychosocial stage of **generativity versus stagnation** is most easily seen in parents

whose children have become young adults. However, people who are not parents, or those whose children live far away, often get involved in nurturing younger people. Most middle adults are confident regarding the knowledge they have accumulated. They are concerned for others and want to contribute to the community. They may do this through social activities, leadership roles in community or religious organizations, and career involvement. Middle adults are often **mentors** (teachers or coaches) to younger adults in these settings.

? Think Critically

Do you have a mentor? Are you a mentor? How did that relationship develop?

Some adults are said to experience a midlife crisis, but most psychologists say that is not a common issue. There are many changes in midlife, and some of them may create a crisis situation for some people, but no single event causes a crisis for all middle adults.

Middle adults realize that they are no longer young. They begin to evaluate their self-concept and their role in the world. There may be times of pain or stress due to physical decline or financial problems. They must explore many questions to continue healthy development. **Middle adults accept that life is not simple and that circumstances occur over which they have little control.**

Sincere listening and caring by other people can help individuals develop to their full potential. Education about life changes helps understanding and aids in coping with challenges. There are support groups for people in crises; learn about such groups in your locality and make referrals when needed.

Get Ready for the NCLEX® Examination!

Key Points

- Adulthood is a time of continuing change and growth. Young adulthood is ages 18 to 35; middle adulthood is considered ages 35 to 65. Older adulthood starts at age 65 to death.
- Schaie's theory of cognitive development calls the young adult stage that of achievement; middle adults are in the stage of responsibility.
- Erikson's theory calls the young adult stage that of intimacy versus isolation. Middle adults are in the stage of generativity versus stagnation.
- Families are groups of interacting individuals who care about and for each other. Families are where children learn basic values.
- Approximately 50% of marriages end in divorce. Divorce affects many people besides the couple involved.
- Maturity is a goal. Mature people demonstrate responsibility, confidence, trust, and self-discipline.
- Young adults are generally healthy and in the best years for reproduction.
- Health promotion practices help adults achieve and maintain health.

- Career exploration is common during early young adulthood. Work provides many benefits economically, socially, and developmentally.
- Personality does not change significantly during the life span. People who want to change must work hard at it.
- Marrying and establishing a family are typical goals of young adults, although they may be postponed until a career is established. Married people are generally happier throughout their lives.
- Young adults expand their concern for other people and for the community.
- Gradual physical changes related to aging begin in the 30s and continue during middle adulthood.
- Menopause means the end of the reproductive years for women. Andropause is a low testosterone level that can gradually happen to men. Although reproductive ability is not lost, physical and cognitive changes occur.
- A person's lifestyle, especially diet, exercise, and stress management, is a major influence on health. Heredity and use of the health care system also contribute.
- Leading causes of death in the 50s and 60s are heart disease, cancer, vascular disease, and accidents.
- Work satisfaction typically increases through life. Middle adults have greater responsibilities and may earn more money. Many become mentors.
- Many adults find returning to school challenging and rewarding. Learning should be a lifelong activity.
- Relationships with others remain the focus of psychosocial development. Marriage, extended family, and friendships are valued.
- Some middle adults become involved in caring for their elderly parents. This can be stressful for families; open communication and community support can help.

Additional Learning Resources

SG Go to your Study Guide for additional learning activities to help you master this chapter content.

evolve Go to your Evolve website (<http://evolve.elsevier.com/deWit/fundamental>) for the following FREE learning resources:

- Animations
- Answer Guidelines for Think Critically boxes and Critical Thinking Questions and Activities
- Answers and Rationales for Review Questions for the NCLEX® Examination
- Glossary with pronunciations in English and Spanish
- Interactive Review Questions for the NCLEX® Examination and more!



Online Resources

- Careers and jobs
www.kellyservices.us/US/Careers/Career-Tips-and-Tools/Tips-and-Tools
<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/careeradviceresources/a/careermanage.htm>
- www.forbes.com/2010/05/20/career-change-middle-age-transferable-skills-forbes-woman-leadership-passion.html
- www.career-tests-guide.com/midlife-career-change.html
- Parenting and family
<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf/strengths/index.htm>
<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf/strengths/fishandouts.htm>

- <http://momsandmentors.ca/resources-general.html>
- www.singleparentsnetwork.com
- www.aboutourkids.org/articles/parenting_styleschildren039s_temperaments_match
- <http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology/a/parenting-style.htm>
- www.healthychildren.org
- Returning to school as an adult:
www.back2college.com/library/gettingstarted.htm
www.selfgrowth.com/articles/SixWise40.html
- Mentoring:
<http://careerplanning.about.com/od/workplacesurvival/a/mentor.htm>
www.seekingsuccess.com/articles/art154.php
- Weight management:
Body Mass Index Calculator, www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi
Dietary Guidelines for Americans, www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm
Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, www.health.gov/PAGuidelines
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, www.eatright.org

Review Questions for the NCLEX® Examination

Choose the best answer for each question.

- Types of families include nuclear, extended, step, blended, and partner. Because of the high incidence of divorce and remarriage, many more _____ families have emerged. (Fill in the blank.)
- Young adults are likely to spend leisure time in activities that are:
 - calm and quiet, alone or with only one or two others.
 - inclusive of their parents and grandparents.
 - physically and mentally demanding and competitive.
 - ways to earn extra money.
- The cognitive development of young adults is aided by:
 - peers who are experiencing similar problems.
 - support of mentors to help identify goals and provide encouragement.
 - interactive games and computer-based training.
 - providing new learning experiences that are unrelated to past knowledge.
- Failure to develop through Erikson's stage of young adulthood will cause the person to be:
 - unable to form meaningful relationships.
 - unsuccessful in further education.
 - unable to keep a job.
 - unsure of how to raise children.
- Which patient statement best reflects successful resolution of Erikson's integrity versus despair developmental stage?
 - "I'm gay, and I'm OK with that."
 - "My partner has been my best friend and support system for 10 years."
 - "I am a gang member because they treat me like family."
 - "I have lived a long and happy life and have raised a beautiful family."