

FREE GUIDE

What Happens to Your Body After 40 — And What You Can Do About It

A clear-eyed look at the physical changes that come with aging — and why most of them are more manageable than you think.

At some point after 40, most people notice that their body doesn't respond the way it used to. Recovery takes longer. Strength comes harder. Aches appear that didn't used to be there. Weight creeps up even when nothing has changed. This isn't your imagination — these are real physiological changes. But they're also far less inevitable than most people assume. This guide explains what's happening and what you can do about it.

MUSCLE MASS

Sarcopenia — the gradual loss of muscle

What happens: Starting around age 30, adults lose an average of 3–8% of their muscle mass per decade. After 60, that rate accelerates. By age 80, many people have lost 30–40% of the muscle mass they had at their peak.

What to do about it: Resistance training is the only proven way to slow, stop, and reverse sarcopenia. Even modest programs — two to three sessions per week — produce significant improvements in muscle mass and strength at any age. It's never too late to start.

The evidence shows meaningful muscle gains in adults in their 70s, 80s, and even 90s with appropriate training.

BONE DENSITY

Osteopenia and osteoporosis

What happens: Bone density peaks in your late 20s and gradually declines from there. Women experience accelerated bone loss in the years around menopause. Low bone density increases fracture risk — especially from falls.

What to do about it: Weight-bearing exercise and resistance training stimulate bone formation and slow bone loss. Activities like walking, hiking, and strength training are more effective for bone health than swimming or cycling. Adequate calcium and vitamin D intake are also essential.

A combination of resistance training and impact activities provides the most benefit for bone density.

METABOLISM

Why weight management gets harder

What happens: Metabolic rate declines with age — primarily because of the loss of metabolically active muscle tissue. Hormonal changes (lower testosterone in men, lower estrogen in women) also contribute. The result: maintaining the same weight requires either eating less or moving more — or both.

What to do about it: Building and maintaining muscle mass is the most effective way to keep metabolism elevated. Each pound of muscle burns approximately 6 calories per day at rest — modest individually, but significant in aggregate. Consistent resistance training preserves the metabolic engine.

Crash diets accelerate muscle loss and make metabolic slowdown worse. Sustainable nutrition combined with strength training is the answer.

JOINT HEALTH

Cartilage, tendons, and connective tissue

What happens: Cartilage has limited ability to repair itself and gradually thins with age and use. Tendons become less elastic and more prone to injury. Recovery from connective tissue injuries takes longer. Many people develop osteoarthritis in commonly loaded joints — knees, hips, spine, and hands.

What to do about it: Appropriate exercise maintains joint health by promoting cartilage nutrition, strengthening the muscles that protect joints, and maintaining mobility and range of motion. The key word is "appropriate" — the right load, done correctly.

Inactivity is harder on cartilage than activity. Joints need movement to stay healthy.

BALANCE AND COORDINATION

Proprioception and reaction time

What happens: The nervous system's ability to sense body position and react quickly declines with age. Inner ear function diminishes. Reaction time slows. The result is increased fall risk and reduced athletic

performance.

What to do about it: Balance and coordination training directly address these declines. Progressive balance challenges, agility drills, and strength training all improve neuromuscular function and reduce fall risk.

These declines respond well to training — the nervous system remains highly adaptable well into later life.

RECOVERY

Why you can't train the same way you did at 25

What happens: Recovery from exercise takes longer with age due to slower protein synthesis, changes in hormone levels, and accumulated wear on connective tissue. Ignoring this leads to overtraining, injury, and burnout.

What to do about it: Smarter programming — not necessarily less training, but better-designed training — accounts for recovery needs. Adequate sleep, nutrition, and rest days are not optional; they're integral to the program.

Many older athletes train just as frequently as younger ones — they simply manage recovery more deliberately.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Aging is real. Decline is not inevitable.

The physical changes described in this guide are real — but they exist on a spectrum, and where you end up on that spectrum is significantly influenced by what you do. The research is consistent: adults who strength train, stay active, sleep well, and eat adequately age dramatically better than those who don't. Not better than they were at 25 — but far better than their sedentary peers.

"The best time to start was 10 years ago. The second best time is today."

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Get a program built around your specific situation

Whether you're 42 and trying to get ahead of these changes, or 65 and feeling their effects — it's not too late to make a significant difference. Tim has worked with clients at every point on this spectrum and knows how to build a program that meets you exactly where you are.

Tim Williams (BodyGrades) is based in Roswell, GA and works with adults 40+ managing pain, rebuilding strength, and returning to the activities they love. With 15 years as a licensed physical therapist assistant, he understands your body at a clinical level — and comes to you.

**Book your assessment at bodygrades.com
or call Tim directly at (678) 316-9459**

Tim Williams, BS, EP-C, KTP | Former Licensed Physical Therapist Assistant | 20+ Years in Healthcare & Fitness