

Divorce, antidepressants, or weight gain/loss can add years to your face

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Your mother's wrinkles — or lack there of, may not be the best predictor of how you'll age. In fact, a new study claims just the opposite. The study, involving identical twins, suggests that despite genetic make-up, certain environmental factors can add years to a person's perceived age. Results just published on the web-based version of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official medical journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), reveal that factors like divorce or the use of antidepressants are the real culprits that can wreak havoc on one's face.

"A person's heritage may initially dictate how they age - but if you introduce certain factors into your life, you will certainly age faster. Likewise, if you avoid those factors you can slow down the hands of time," said ASPS Member Surgeon and study author Bahaman Guyuron, MD, professor and chairman, department of plastic surgery, University Hospitals Case Medical Center. "In this study, we looked at identical twins because they are genetically programmed to age exactly the same, and in doing so we essentially discovered that, when it comes to your face, it is possible to cheat your biological clock."

During the study, Dr. Guyuron and his colleagues obtained comprehensive questionnaires and digital images from 186 pairs of identical twins. The images were reviewed by an independent panel, which then recorded the perceived age difference between the siblings.

Results showed that twins who had been divorced appeared nearly 2

years older than their siblings who were married, single or even widowed. Antidepressant use was associated with a significantly older appearance and researchers also found that weight played a major factor too. In those sets of twins who were less than 40 years old, the heavier twin was perceived as being older, while in those groups over 40 years old, the heavier twin appeared younger.

According to Dr. Guyuron, "the presence of stress could be one of the common denominators in those twins who appeared older." Additionally, researchers suspect that continued relaxation of the facial muscles due to antidepressant use, could account for sagging. And though they do not advocate gaining weight to look younger, researchers note that losing abnormal amounts of weight not only have harmful effects on a person's health, but on their appearance, too.

"This research is important for two reasons," Dr. Guyuron said. "First, we have discovered a number of new factors that contribute to aging and second, our findings put science behind the idea that volume replacement rejuvenates the face."

Source: American Society of Plastic Surgeons

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