

How old you feel matters (and it changes day to day)

June 30 2015, by Matt Shipman



Credit: Diabetes Care

New research finds that how old you feel changes on a daily basis – and that has very real ramifications for your well-being.

"We care about how old people feel because this is associated with physical, mental and [emotional health](#)," says Shevaun Neupert, a psychology researcher at NC State University and co-author of a paper on the work. "But, to date, it wasn't clear how quickly these perceptions of 'subjective age' could change."

The researchers also wanted to determine if other variables that could be tracked on a daily basis could be used to predict how old someone felt on any given day.

It turns out, they can.

Neupert and her collaborators, Dana Kotter-Grühn of Duke University and Yannick Stephan of the University of Montpellier, conducted a study with 43 adults between the ages of 60 and 96. Each participant filled out a daily survey for eight consecutive days, asking them about how old they felt, whether they'd experienced any stress that day, what their [mood](#) was like, and whether they'd experienced any negative physical symptoms or [physical pain](#) that day.

"We learned that how old people feel does change from day to day, and that specific events can influence that perception," Neupert says.

In general, study participants reported feeling 13 years younger than their actual age. But on days when people were stressed, had a [negative mood](#) or experienced physical pain they felt less young. On days when participants reported having a negative mood they felt only eight years younger. However, having a [positive mood](#) did not make participants feel any younger.

"This finding raises the possibility of using perceived subjective age as part of an evaluation to determine someone's overall well-being," Neupert says.

More information: "Feeling Old Today? Daily Health, Stressors, and Affect Explain Day-to-Day Variability in Subjective Age."

[www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10 ... 8870446.2015.1061130](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17445019.2015.1061130)

Provided by North Carolina State University

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