

Changes in Dexterity: A Fact Sheet on Aging

Strength/Dexterity Changes:

- In the young adult, 43 percent of body weight is muscle. With age (above 70), lean body mass declines about 25 percent of body weight.
- There is an increase in fat cells—to 1/3 body weight by age 70. There is also a decline in nerve activity.
- Both endurance and reaction time are decreased.

Dexterity difficulties may produce these behaviors:

- Discontinue handwriting—letters, etc.
- Difficulties in such daily activities as grasping, opening heavy doors, manipulating buttons and zippers, lacing shoes
- Spilling

Actions you may take:

- Position items for ease in reaching or use magnetic latches or take cabinet doors off. Change door knobs to handles.
- Allow/encourage more time
- Encourage independence