1. Baby boomers are the fastest growing segment of the population.  
2. Families don’t bother with their older relatives.  
3. Everyone becomes confused or forgetful if they live long enough.  
4. You can be too old to exercise.  
5. Heart disease is a much bigger problem for older men than for older women.  
6. The older you get, the less you sleep.  
7. People should watch their weight as they age.  
8. Most older people are depressed. Why shouldn’t they be?  
9. There’s no point in screening older people for cancer because they can’t be treated.  
10. Older people take more medications than younger people.  
11. People begin to lose interest in sex around age 55.  
12. If your parents had Alzheimer’s disease, you will inevitably get it.  
13. Diet and exercise reduce the risk for osteoporosis.  
14. As your body changes with age, so does your personality.  
15. Older people might as well accept urinary accidents as a fact of life.  
16. Suicide is mainly a problem for teenagers.  
17. Falls and injuries “just happen” to older people.  
18. Everybody gets cataracts.  
19. Extremes of heat and cold can be especially dangerous for older people.  
20. “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”
Answers

1. **False.**
   There are more than 3 million Americans over the age of 85. That number is expected to quadruple by the year 2040, when there will be more than 12 million people in that age group. The population age 85 and older is the fastest growing age group in the U.S.

2. **False.**
   Most older people live close to their children and see them often. Many live with their spouses. An estimated 80 percent of men and 60 percent of women live in family settings. Only 5 percent of the older population lives in nursing homes.

3. **False.**
   Confusion and serious forgetfulness in old age can be caused by Alzheimer’s disease or other conditions that result in irreversible damage to the brain. But at least 100 other problems can bring on the same symptoms. A minor head injury, high fever, poor nutrition, adverse drug reactions, and depression also can lead to confusion. These conditions are treatable, however, and the confusion they cause can be eliminated.

4. **False.**
   Exercise at any age can help strengthen the heart and lungs and lower blood pressure. It also can improve muscle strength and, if carefully chosen, lessen bone loss with age. See a physician before beginning a new exercise program.

5. **False.**
   The risk of heart disease increases dramatically for women after menopause. By age 65, both men and women have a one in three chance of showing symptoms. But risks can be significantly reduced by following a healthy diet and exercising.

6. **False.**
   In later life, it’s the quality of sleep that declines, not total sleep time. Researchers have found that sleep tends to become more fragmented as people age. A number of reports suggest that older people are less likely than younger people to stay awake throughout the day and that older people tend to take more naps than younger people.

7. **True.**
   Most people gain weight as they age. Because of changes in the body and decreasing physical activity, older people usually need fewer calories. Still, a balanced diet is important. Older people require essential nutrients just like younger adults. You should be concerned about your weight if there has been an involuntary gain or loss of 10 pounds in the past 6 months.

8. **False.**
   Most older people are not depressed. When it does occur, depression is treatable throughout the life cycle using a variety of approaches, such as family support, psychotherapy, or antidepressant medications. A physician can determine whether the depression is caused by medication an older person might be taking, by physical illness, stress, or other factors.

9. **False.**
   Many older people can beat cancer, especially if it’s found early. Over half of all cancers occur in people 65 and older, which means that screening for cancer in this age group is especially important.

10. **True.**
    Older people often have a combination of conditions that require drugs. They consume 25 percent of all medications and can have
many more problems with adverse reactions. Check with your doctor to make sure all drugs and dosages are appropriate.

11. **False.**
Most older people can lead an active, satisfying sex life.

12. **False.**
The overwhelming number of people with Alzheimer's disease have not inherited the disorder. In a few families, scientists have seen an extremely high incidence of the disease and have identified genes in these families which they think may be responsible.

13. **True.**
Women are at particular risk for osteoporosis. They can help prevent bone loss by eating foods rich in calcium and exercising regularly throughout life. Foods such as milk and other dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, salmon, sardines, and tofu promote new bone growth. Activities such as walking, biking, and simple exercises to strengthen the upper body also can be effective.

14. **False.**
Research has found that, except for the changes that can result from Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, personality is one of the few constants of life. That is, you are likely to age much as you’ve lived.

15. **False.**
Urinary incontinence is a symptom, not a disease. Usually, it is caused by specific changes in body function that can result from infection, diseases, pregnancy, or the use of certain medications. A variety of treatment options are available for people who seek medical attention.

16. **False.**
Suicide is most prevalent among people age 65 and older. An older person’s concern with suicide should be taken very seriously and professional help should be sought quickly.

17. **False.**
Falls are the most common cause of injuries among people over age 65. But many of these injuries, which result in broken bones, can be avoided. Regular vision and hearing tests and good safety habits can help prevent accidents. Knowing whether your medications affect balance and coordination also is a good idea.

18. **False.**
Not everyone gets cataracts, although a great many older people do. Some 18 percent of people between the ages of 65 and 74 have cataracts, while more than 40 percent of those between 75 and 85 have the problem. Cataracts can be treated very successfully with surgery; more than 90 percent of people say they can see better after the procedure.

19. **True.**
The body’s thermostat tends to function less efficiently with age, making the older person’s body less able to adapt to heat or cold.

20. **False.**
People at any age can learn new information and skills. Research indicates that older people can obtain new skills and improve old ones, including how to use a computer.
The National Institute on Aging (NIA) is responsible for the "conduct and support of biomedical, social, and behavioral research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs with respect to the aging process and the diseases and other special problems and needs of the aged." To carry out its mission, the NIA engages in collaborative activities with other NIH institutes and Federal agencies. Where appropriate, research is conducted through interventions and clinical trials.

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