

Ageing women will require 5 years more care than men

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Middle-aged women face a health timebomb and will need 5½ years more care than men after they hit 65, a study has warned.

Women now in their 50s will spend an average of 12½ years at the end of their lives depending on carers to support their daily needs, researchers predict, as growing numbers live with multiple illnesses.

For 8½ years women's care needs will be relatively low, such as needing help to have a bath or with housework or shopping. For a further 1.3 years they will need daily help with tasks such as dressing or cooking a hot meal. This will be followed by a final 2.7 years of intense dependency, when they rely on carers to visit the lavatory, to transfer from a bed or chair, or to eat.

Men can expect to require care for the final seven years of their lives: 5.1 years with low needs, 0.8 years with medium dependency and the final 1.1 years requiring high levels of care.

The study, by academics at the University of Newcastle and London School of Economics and published in *The Lancet Public Health*, is the first to estimate care needs in England until

Long-term care needs

Life expectancy

	Men	Women	Difference
2015	83.7	86.1	+2.4
2035	87.2	89.1	+1.9

Healthy years

2015	76.1	75.7	+0.4
2035	80.2	76.6	+3.6

Years needing care



2035 using modelling based on risks of disease as well as factors such as levels of education, physical activity and risks from smoking.

It looked at health profiles of 41,323 people aged 35 and older from three studies and mapped the prevalence of 12 chronic diseases and geriatric conditions in the adult population, such as dementia, coronary heart disease, cancer, arthritis, respiratory disease and diabetes, to model future care needs. Carol Jagger, professor of epidemiology of ageing at the University

of Newcastle, said the biggest surprise was that more men currently in their 50s and 60s would, on average, enjoy longer healthy lives by 2035.

Women live longer, with an average lifespan of 86.1 years compared with 83.7 years for men, but are more likely to develop disabilities or ill health. Men enjoy 76.1 years of healthy living, 0.4 years longer than women and by 2035 this will have grown to 80.2 years of independence for men, 3.6 years longer than for women. Professor Jagger said: "Men are stronger than women and lose their muscle mass less than women and so women reach a threshold when they can't do activities at a faster rate than men do." She said that lower care needs in old age could be delayed or even reversed by resistance training exercises to build muscle strength.

Overall, more than a million older people in England will need round-the-clock care in two decades' time, up by a third. That would include 446,000 aged 85 and above, nearly double the number now. There will also be an increase in numbers of adults living into old age with multiple long-term health conditions, which the authors said had big implications for future spending on long-term care.

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