New Software Can Show How People Will Look As They Grow Older

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Want to know what you will look like at age 40? How about 60? If you're not too scared at the thought, you might be interested in a new software program researchers at the University of Washington developed that can accurately predict what people will look like as they age, from age 3 through 80, NBC News reports.

The program works in less than 30 seconds by comparing a person's photo with a database of 82 faces found online of both men and women that show these individuals from birth up to age 80. The age-progression software uses real-life algorithms to alter a test subject's facial features on screen; calculations are based on visual aging averages and the sizes of their eyes and nose and the width of the mouth. In other words, the program doesn't just add gray hair and wrinkles; the shape of the subject's face actually changes.

Scientists said that the program is so precise that randomized survey participants couldn't tell the difference between real-life before and after photos and those generated by the computer.

What's more, law enforcement agencies are already clamoring for the tool, saying it could help provide more accurate images of missing people than the technology currently used by many police organizations.

Some doctors believe the program could also help encourage people to avoid unhealthy habits that are proved to accelerate the aging process, such as smoking or tanning. In addition, the tool might also help doctors who specialize in plastic surgery and facial reconstruction achieve a more natural look for their clients.

"The goal is to make people look very natural, and often we'll go back and look at a photo of a person as a young person to meet that," explained Melissa Piliang, MD, a dermatologist at the Cleveland Clinic. Plus, she added, "I think everybody's curious about what they will look like as they age."

New research on identical twins proves that smoking cigarettes can cause visible premature aging. Click here for more information.

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