Despite ongoing research in the field of gerontology, false beliefs, or myths, about older adults persist. The stereotypes include beliefs about the physical and psychosocial characteristics and the lifestyles of older adults. Stereotypes, both positive and negative, may be held by younger and older adults but do not automatically imply age-based prejudice. However, when health care providers hold negative stereotypes about aging care for older adults, those stereotypes may adversely affect the quality of the care provided. Nurses, while personally susceptible to the myths and stereotypes held by society, have the responsibility to dispel the myths and replace the stereotypes with accurate information.

Older adults are sometimes stereotyped as ill, disabled, and physically unattractive. However, although many experience chronic conditions or have at least one disability that limits their performance of activities of daily living, only 26.2% of older adults describe their health as poor or fair. Other common misconceptions hold that older adults are not interested in sex and that any interest in sexual activity is abnormal and should be discouraged. Yet older adults report continued enjoyment of sexual relationships.