



BOOMERS

Spring and Aging Youthfully

By Eve Lees
Certified Nutrition Coach

Slow the aging process by minimizing free radicals.

A free radical is a waste product, or unstable molecule, created naturally by normal actions that constantly occur in the body. A healthy body is able to keep this waste production under control. However, poor lifestyle practices also create free radicals – often beyond what the body can handle. These unstable molecules can multiply and attack, causing molecular damage to cells, tissues and organs. This can lead to many diseases, such as cancer and heart disease. Free radicals also speed the aging process.

As you age, be prudent and cautious of the biggest producers of free radicals: intense physical and mental stress, sunlight, and chemicals.

Intense physical stress.

Exercise is good for you, but like anything else, more is not necessarily better. We can accelerate aging by subjecting the body to continual wear and tear. While regular, gentle to moderate exercise has been shown to boost the immune system, intense activity does the opposite – it temporarily slows immune functions.

The ability to recuperate from free radical damage lowers some-

what with age. When intense activity is added, the aging body is less able to recuperate. As you age, pace yourself during exercise and be consistent. More important, physical activity should be fun. Don't kill yourself.

Mental stress.

Worry causes metabolic changes at the cellular level; changes that damage cells and create free radicals. Change or control your responses to stressful situations – or avoid those situations entirely. Learn to meditate. Spend quality time by yourself or with loved ones. Prioritize your daily tasks. Learn to say “No”.

Sunlight.

Avoid it, particularly if you are concerned with skin appearance. Lots of sun damages cells. It dehydrates the skin, and affects its elasticity. Over time, skin that has been exposed to long “sun tanning” sessions becomes dry, wrinkled, loose and stretched-looking. Exercise will improve the flabby body parts on an aging body that are due to untoned muscles. But there are no exercises to regain tone in flaccid skin, so start now by protecting it from the sun. You'll have smoother, tighter skin far past your 50th birthday.

Chemicals.

They're everywhere. Monitor and controlling this one fac-

tor can be difficult. Just do what you can. Don't smoke. Choose organically grown foods whenever possible. Opt for glass instead of plastic. Buy natural fibre clothing, rugs, etc., as opposed to synthetics. Read labels to avoid chemicals and preservatives in processed, packaged foods (better still; cut back drastically on their use!). Use products less harmful to you and the environment, including what you apply to your skin and hair; the chemicals absorbed from cosmetics and other personal care items can contribute to poor aging.

In addition to avoiding the major producers of free radicals, keep your body youthful and strong with sensible dietary practices.

Make your diet high in antioxidants. Antioxidants seek out and neutralize free radicals and stimulate the body to recover more quickly from free radical damage. Richest sources are the brighter and deeper-coloured fruits and vegetables. However, all whole, natural foods contain properties to keep the immune system strong and balanced.

Your food intake should be as unprocessed and unchanged by humans as possible. This assures the food is rich in its natural nutri-

tional qualities. And a high-nutrient diet is possibly the biggest factor for aging well.

Eve Lees is a Certified Nutrition Coach, a Health Speaker, and a Health Writer for several publications. She lives in British Columbia, Canada. ■

