

# Can we stay looking young?

*Staying young is the latest Holy Grail, with celebrities peering from the pages of glossy magazines with wrinkle-free skin, but is some skin genetically more youthful than others or can we do something to reverse the signs of ageing? We ask a nutritionist, a dietician and a plastic surgeon how we can hold back the years...*

**The nutrition therapist:**

**Maureen Houston, Summertown Clinic, tel: 01865 558 561; Beaumont Street Chiropractic and Natural Health Clinic, tel: 01865 728696**

"There is a genetic component to youthful skin without a doubt but good nutrition can make all the difference between looking old and not showing signs of ageing. As well as making you look better on the outside, it goes a long way to making you healthy on the inside too. I have been lucky enough to inherit fantastic genes and although I'm 63 people say I look in my 40s - and I've also got more energy than most people in their 30s.

"There is no question that you can boost your chances of looking young with a diet full of green leafy vegetables, fruit and water. Vegetables are so important and I would recommend up to 10 portions a day, including cabbage, broccoli, watercress and spinach as well as brightly coloured vegetables like peppers and beetroot, which give enormous health boosting benefits. Water is great for the skin so drink two to three litres of filtered or bottled water a day for its immune-boosting and energy-boosting benefits. Also make sure you sleep - this has a great effect on your skin. It certainly is possible to reverse the signs of ageing with good nutrition - I've seen it happen. Just eliminating sugar and wheat from your diet and stopping smoking will make a dramatic difference. I smoked from the ages of 18-28 but I know the damage has been reversed by eating healthily from my late 20s and exercising. As well as keeping you looking young, good nutrition will keep you fit and healthy."

**The dietician: Emma Shaw, The Bell Trees Clinic, Botley, tel: 01865 200365, emma.shaw4@tesco.net**

"We all want to look young, fit and healthy. I have to admit that living a busy, hectic life in London in my 30s could have taken more of a toll if I hadn't made a late conversion to the benefits of good nutrition. Qualifying as a dietician at King's College in London took four years, but I know my health is substantially better now than it was when I started. That doesn't mean I exist on a diet of quinoa and wheatgrass. I love a slice of



PHOTO: EVE MAGUIRE

chocolate cake and a roast with all the trimmings, just not every day. Eating well and staying youthful looking, should be more about what you include than exclude from your diet.

"It's never too late to improve the balance of your diet and experience the boost that can provide. Your 30s are the point at which it's harder to get away with a completely devil-may-care attitude and still look your best. It's true that some people have great genes, smoke, hardly move a muscle, don't know one end of a carrot from the other and still put Liz Hurley to shame. But in my experience those people are rare. In reality, I've seen people who have decided to lose weight for health reasons and after a few months are looking 10 years younger. The changes you make to your diet to lose weight successfully involve basics that improve your circulation, energy levels and intake of essential nutrients. Just drinking enough fluid throughout the day can have a dramatic effect on how your skin looks.

"The best way of getting vital nutrients around the body is by promoting a healthy heart and circulation. Keeping active, eating plenty of a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, good sources of protein low in saturated fats such as fish, lean meat and beans and pulses, and using healthy oils such as olive or rapeseed sparingly in cooking. These are the things that really work. They will improve your intake of essential fats, antioxidants and the vitamins and minerals that are important for healthy skin.

"I don't believe in quick fixes, and that includes high doses of supplements. They can have their place but you can't enjoy a vitamin pill in the same way as a bowl strawberries."

**The consultant plastic surgeon:**

**Mr Adrian Richards, AR & Associates, Thame, tel: 01844 214362, www.arandassociates.co.uk**

Voted Number One surgeon in the UK for breast surgery by The Independent, and voted Number One plastic surgeon in the Home Counties by The Daily Mail

"Good genes certainly do have a lot to do with youthful skin and some people are born lucky. If your parents have good skin you're likely to inherit good skin too, but even then it's so important to look after your skin with moisturising. When skin ages it gets thinner, dryer and less tight because the collagen separates. Environmental factors also cause skin to age, such as sun damage and smoking as well as diet, alcohol intake and dehydration. To keep skin looking young it is vital to take care of it from an early age. In your 20s lines aren't so indented but by your 30s lines become deeper and deeper but there are treatments you can have that are non-surgical and will make a great improvement to achieve younger looking skin without going under the surgeon's knife. Non-surgical treatments to remove crow's feet, frown lines and gravity lines from around the mouth will create a more youthful appearance and can be done in your lunch hour. Botox will help to weaken lines from around the eyes, making them look younger and fruit acid peels and micro-dermabrasion remove the top layer of skin.

"Surgical treatments should never give such a dramatic effect that it's hard to recognise a person, and there is a recent trend for a new type of face lift called MACS (Minimal Access Cranial Suspension), which uses smaller incisions and puts muscles back to where they were before, creating a natural, more youthful appearance. Some celebrities these days are opting for this type of face lift and having it done in their 40s. I would advise anyone considering cosmetic surgery to do their research well and ask the surgeon how many operations they have done before. Ask for 'before' and 'after' pictures and always speak to someone who has had the operation. I encourage patients to take a holistic approach and take care of themselves. A face lift won't improve the quality of the skin so it is vital to take care of yourself to look naturally well." ■