A Few Years Later . . .

Aging is inevitable, but are you aging faster than you really need to? Apparently, there are foods and lifestyles that can cause you to look and feel older.

As I investigated this topic, I found some interesting ideas like “sleeping on your side or belly and smooshing your face into the pillow can cause wrinkles.” The advice for that habit was to get a satin pillowcase. Okay that’s an easy fix. We are told that getting seven to eight hours of sleep a night does wonders for your looks and your attitude.

Several studies show that chronic stress triggers the release of free radicals, the unstable molecules that damage cells and are responsible for aging. “People think multitasking is good, but you don't actually get anything done — you just create more stress,” says Dr. Raymond Casciari, chief medical officer of St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, Calif. Instead of trying to do it all, Casciari suggests concentrating on one task at a time and only moving on once you finish it. Okay, I’ll put that on the list of things to work on.

There is a process in your body called glycation that happens when you eat more sugar than your body can process at one time or over time. “This process can rob you of your youthful glow — creating dark circles under the eyes, loss of tone, puffiness, an increase in fine lines and wrinkles and a loss of facial contours and increased pore size,” according to Dr. Susan Stuart, a San Diego, Calif., board-certified dermatologist. So eating less sugar can help maintain a more youthful appearance. Okay what else?

Sitting. Long periods of sitting. Dr. Casciari suggests that when you sit more than 30 minutes your body starts depositing more sugar in your cells, which can cause weight problems. He suggests getting up and moving around every 30 minutes or so. Is that why I feel sluggish when I sit at my computer for long periods of time? Interesting.

A study from the British Journal of Sports Medicine states, “The dangers of a sedentary lifestyle are well-documented: People who spend most of their days parked in a chair are at increased risk for kidney disease, cardiovascular disease and cancer. So exercising
regularly helps to prevent these health issues and keeps you living longer.” Study participants who exercised 150 minutes or more a week lived 10 to 13 years longer than the inactive bunch.

Living in a low humidity environment takes its toll. About 40 to 60 percent humidity is optimal for glowing skin. Relative humidity in Fairbanks ranges from 44 percent in May to 76 percent in January. Not bad, you say … that is outside relative humidity. The humidity inside our homes when we heat them up goes down. You can combat that with a pot of water on the woodstove or a humidifier in winter, being careful about frost on the windows that can melt and create mold on the sills. Drink lots of water.

Slouching can affect a healthy, vigorous appearance and as we age our slouch can become a spinal deformity. Hours spent hunched over a keyboard, an electronic device or a book and slouching in front of the TV — all of that can add up to back problems or a spine that loses its natural curve of support. Check in with your posture throughout the day. Pull your ears up as you let your shoulders drape over your hips, your hips over your knees, knees over ankles. Stand or sit with ease and elegance, in alignment, to keep your spine healthy as you age.

Another tip I read over and over was to eat plenty of dark-colored vegetables. The antioxidants help deal with free radicals that can damage healthy cells in the body. So eat well, play or exercise frequently, drink lots of water, interrupt long periods of sitting with movement, stop slouching and focus on what you are doing. Sounds like the same list my mother had for me many decades ago. What’s on your list?

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