

Oceanfront Yoga  
in Virginia Beach

# Age Makeover

HEALTH

SMALL CHANGES IN DIET AND FITNESS CAN BRING BACK THE YOUTHFUL GLOW

By Pam Majumdar

**N**o one ever says it's healthy to live in the past, but let's face it—we all want to retain yesterday's youth while still moving forward.

And as regions go, our area is one of the places to be for locals looking to regain (or keep) that youthful glow. The Hampton Roads metropolitan area was named the 10th fittest in the U.S. by the American College of Sports Medicine's American Fitness Index™ in 2009.

But aging is tricky. Countless factors can make two people of the same (in medical speak) "Chronological Age" look like they belong in different age brackets: genes, environment, fitness level, nutrition, even luck. While there's no guarantee that all the healthy habits in the world can counter genes, certain measures are non-negotiable for anyone seriously aspiring to gain wisdom without the wrinkles.

"Body Age" boils down to two things: healthy body and healthy mind.

It's easy to not pay attention to what we eat, but good nutrition is paramount, says Anya Wolfenden, director of communications at The Heritage in Virginia Beach, which includes a café, store and holistic center.

"The idea is to limit free radical production," she says. Cells with free radicals can become damaged over time and cause aging, theorized scientist Denham Harman in the 1950s.

"Antioxidants basically scour these free radicals."

Top antioxidants include açai berries, goji berries, prunes, black raspberries and mangosteen. "It's best to (eat) a handful of berries every day," recommends Wolfenden.

It's also essential to reduce inflammation, which accelerates aging, she says. Consuming too many acids, found in most processed foods, can cause inflammation.

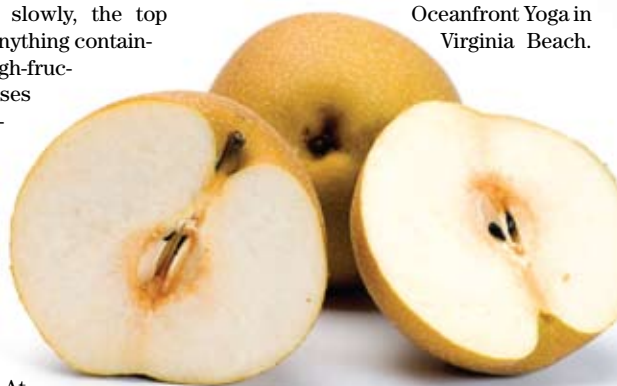
To tweak your diet slowly, the top things to eliminate are anything containing white flour and high-fructose corn syrup, advises Wolfenden, who recommends substituting with whole grains and agave nectar, an organic sweetener.

In addition to consuming raw foods and plenty of water on a daily basis, you can also detox your body via hydrotherapy. At

The Heritage, clients encase their bodies in a steam cabinet that cleanses toxins. (Cleanses and dietary improvements have historically been said to improve eyesight and lessen aches and pains.)

Fitness professionals advise another essential for health: staying active. Moderate activity several days per week is the general rule, but your body can become accustomed to and benefit from more rigorous exercise. Resistance training strengthens bones and aids balance. The centuries-old practice of yoga also packs countless benefits.

"As we age, we stop moving and the spine gets old and rigid," says Connie Weisberg, co-owner of Oceanfront Yoga in Virginia Beach.



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Since yoga requires movement in multiple directions, the spine is revitalized. "I have witnessed rejuvenation in many people over 40 and some even younger," she says.

Weisberg says she's had three surgeries for various joints, but "beyond physical therapy, the only progress was made through doing yoga."

Yoga's countless *asanas* (poses) can help slow down aging through inversions, which "reverse the blood flow away from the lower extremities, bring fresh blood to the brain and then open up the capillaries and veins again when standing upright," says Weisberg.

"In addition, twisting wrings out the organs of toxins and rinses them with fresh blood upon returning to forward postures."

Nutrition and exercise aside, your mental outlook also has a huge effect on how quickly you age. Dr. Amy Wechsler, a New-York based dermatologist, called stress "the root of all evil today" in her 2008 book *The Mind-Beauty Connection*.

Focusing on the positive and keeping a big-picture perspective are no simple tasks. What is calming and stress-relieving differs for us all, but if you keep the mind healthy, it will show.

"Sometimes we need to be quiet and meditative while other times we need the physical, sweaty practice to keep us youthful and fit," says Weisberg. **HRM**

