

ANTI AGING PART 1: THE BASICS

by Gary Null Ph.D.

Introduction:

History regards Ponce de Leon's search for "The Fountain of Youth" as folly, and justifiably so. But in today's world, rejuvenation is more than a mere dream as scientific advancements in biochemistry are providing profound insights into the workings of the human body, testable theories on aging, and keys to slowing down the aging process. We now know that aging begins long before the first signs of wrinkles, gray hair, and loss of body tone appear. By the time we reach our late twenties and early thirties, organ systems are already beginning to shrink. As the years progress, we start to produce smaller and smaller amounts of hormones, and everything from memory and vision to sexual potency starts to diminish.

Where we once had no choice but to accept this downward spiral as an inevitable fact of life, state-of-the-art research has opened up a whole new way of thinking where aging is now seen as a treatable condition. Moreover, revisiting ancient cultures further enhances our understanding of how to improve our quality and length of life. We will, of course, grow older in years, but there is much we can do much to slow down the biological processes of aging, and therefore remain internally young much longer. The following pages reveal the best of what experts in the field have to say.

Healthful approaches to anti-aging should be of particular interest at this time, as over 80 million "baby boomers" are now between 40 and 50 years of age. This generation has subjected itself to many physical, mental, and emotional stresses in an attempt to have it all. One usual "solution" to aging is cosmetic surgery, which upsets the body's natural balance and is needed again and again. Additionally, millions will be prescribed hormone replacement therapies, which pose dire health risks including cancer.

It is important to know that there are healthier alternatives. You can retone the body, grow new tissue, redevelop the muscular system, in short, slow down, stop, and reverse the aging process, if you make the commitment to do so.

Slowing down the aging process begins with attention to lifestyle. This includes a sound diet, a regular exercise program, a means of cleansing the system, and a way to relax from too much stress.

Diet

Staying youthful is synonymous with staying healthy. And staying healthy is controlled, to a large degree, by daily habits of eating. Dr. Hans Kugler, president and founder of the International Academy of Alternative Medicine and author of *Tripping the Clock: a Practical Guide to Anti-Aging and Rejuvenation*, offers these dietary guidelines:

Know your daily caloric maintenance level. Know the amount of calories you need to maintain your ideal weight. Then you can easily make adjustments for weight gain or weight loss, as needed.

Vary the amount of food you eat according to the time of day. Eat like a king at breakfast, a prince at lunch, and a pauper at dinner.

Reduce overall fat and sugar intake. Eliminate refined carbohydrates from your diet. Eat lots of complex carbohydrates, vegetables, and whole grains. These foods are the building blocks of good health. They are discussed in more detail below.

Have lean or nonfat protein at every meal. Though important, we now know that more is not better. We do not need vast amounts of protein as we once thought. Rather, we should distribute small amounts of protein throughout the day.

Include organically grown foods in your diet. Chemically-laden foods are a burden to the body. Even small amounts of toxins accumulate and eventually wear it down. Be kind to your body by keeping the diet as pure as possible.

Healthy foods rejuvenate the life force by supplying the body with multiple anti-aging nutrients. They also help to resist the onset of disease--most cancer is diet-related--and may even reverse chronic conditions. Dolores Riccio, author of *Superfoods for Life* says the best foods are those given to us in nature:

Fruits and Vegetables. Most fruits and vegetables contain valuable nutrients for anti-aging. Especially noteworthy are the cruciferous vegetables--broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, kale, radishes, and watercress--for their anti-cancer properties. Melatonin, for immunity-boosting and better sleep, is found in bananas, corn, and tomatoes. Chromium helps regulate insulin and can be found in apples, broccoli, grapes, raisins, mushrooms, and potatoes. Magnesium defends against asthma and heart disease, and it is also a memory booster. Good fruit and vegetable sources include avocados, bananas, and dark green vegetables. Vitamin E's helper selenium is found in onions, shallots, mushrooms, and garlic. These foods help the heart and keep the skin elastic.

Intense color and flavor indicate health-giving properties. Dark green and orange vegetables, for example, are high in carotene, which protects against cancer. And bitter greens help the liver. Citrus fruits, such as oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, help rid the body of free radicals, keep the skin young-looking, and accelerate healing.

Grains and Legumes. These fiber-rich foods keep our digestive tracts healthy. They are high in B vitamins, which work to support the brain, and rich sources of vitamin E, making them good for the heart and skin. In addition, whole grain fibers, such as brown rice, contain zinc, for nourishment of the male reproductive system and repair of the body.

Oils. Contrary to common trends, we all need some fat in our diets. a teaspoon a day of monounsaturated fats are essential for keeping the brain and heart functioning properly, for protecting our appearance, for raising HDL (good) cholesterol and lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol, and for keeping our hair and skin from becoming dry. Good sources of monounsaturated fats are olive oil and canola oil.

Avoid saturated fats, those found in potato chips, meats, cheeses, coconut and palm oil. Polyunsaturated fats, like those found in flaxseed oil, and fish are precursors for Omega 3's, such as DHA and EPA, which prevent clotting of blood and stickiness of platelets. Research shows that these fats can get into the blood vessels and stabilize plaque. People who eat one fish meal a week have a 50 percent reduction of sudden deaths over people who don't. Healthy sources of fish are deep-water migratory fish, like salmon, halibut, and cod.

The benefits of soy. Soybeans and soybean products are a staple of Japanese diets, and for good reason. Scientific research has identified healing agents in soybeans, called glycosides. Glycosides contain substances that protect the cell from oxidation from the low density lipoproteins found in "bad" cholesterol. Rather than rely on hamburgers, pork, dairy, chicken, and pork for protein--these foods are high in saturated fats that damage tissues--we should use high-protein soy products often.

Exercise

Generally, the older we become, the more frail we get. We tend to lose muscle mass which results in an inability to perform many physical tasks. While most of us accept this as the norm, it does not have to be so. In fact, according to Dr. Kugler, one of our most important anti-aging goals should be to prevent the loss of muscle mass: "When real old people shovel along, you think that a wind will blow them over. That's because they have lost their muscle mass, the prime substance for maintaining many bodily functions, from blood sugar regulation to mood control, to physical activity.

"Contrary to popular belief, muscle mass can be gained at a later age. As a matter of fact, I know a gentleman, aged 76, with a magnificent body. Recently, I saw pictures of him at 32, and I can tell you, he looks better now."

The key to building muscle mass is a regular exercise program which includes both cardiovascular and muscle building workouts. Lean body mass helps to burn more calories and maintain good shape well into our later years.

Cleansing

Toxic substances are an unfortunate fact of life in the modern world, where they routinely pervade our food, water, and air. Poisons enter our systems and become stored in adipose and nerve tissue. Over time, these chemicals accumulate to dangerous levels which, in turn, impair immune function and reproductive capacity.

Kugler explains some of the harm: "Animals in the wild are becoming endangered, not because man is killing them but simply because they are being born neutral. They cannot reproduce. a couple of years ago, there were hearings in the U.S. House in Washington,

where an Ohio State reproductive scientist started the talk by saying, "Every man in this room is only half the man his grandfather used to be."

"It's due to the fact that over many years these so-called safe levels [of poisons] in foods and everything else--and I believe that these safe levels don't really exist--are absorbed right into the body. Even swimming in slightly polluted water will cause harm as body tissues absorb the toxic chemicals. We have an accumulation of toxic chemicals that comes from pesticides, everyday chemicals, and drugs, which we consume in great quantities. So, they accumulate in ever increasing amounts. They then affect reproductive capacity and immune function. Over 450 publications show that this is so."

While we can't avoid exposure to toxins, we can eliminate them from our bodies. Kugler suggests using Method, a technique developed by the Foundation for the Advancement in Science and Education in Los Angeles. The procedure begins by getting normally stationary fats moving with niacin. The vitamin will make the skin flush, (although there are some types that do not cause flushing). Small amounts should be taken at first, with the goal of building up gradually to one or two grams. a half hour to an hour later, exercise or a sauna is employed to induce sweating, so that toxins will exit the fat cells, re-enter the blood, and leave the body through the skin.

It is important to supplement the program with antioxidants and to take in only good fats via quality vegetable oils. The latter contain essential fatty acids that help normalize hormone reactions in the body through prostaglandin formations. Additionally, organically grown food and filtered water will help prevent the absorption of more toxic chemicals. Using this approach, Kuger maintains, the body will become free of most accumulated poisons within two to three weeks, and it will maintain far greater health.

Dr. Stephen Sinatra, author of *Optimal Health: a Natural Life-Saving Prescription for Body and Mind*, recommends bowel cleansing as a way to prevent and reverse many diseases, from arthritis and cancer, to heart disease and psoriasis. He says that a diet rich in raw foods, such as apples, celery, cabbage, and broccoli, has a high enzyme content that will promote bowel cleansing. This will help to break down food in the stomach rather than overwork the intestines. Additionally, digestive enzyme supplements can be taken. Probiotics, the friendly bacteria found in bifido bacterium and lactobacilli, will help the

bowel. Sauerkraut is a natural food source of these probiotics. In addition, eight to ten glasses of water a day should be taken. Another nutrient helpful to the digestive tract is aloe vera. Going on a short one or three day fast will give the bowel a rest so the body can rejuvenate itself. A fast of water and apple juice is especially cleansing to the bowel. It goes without saying that processed foods, such as breads, white table sugar, caffeine, and alcohol should be avoided.

Letting Go of Stress

Stress—physical, mental, and emotional—is an unavoidable part of life. While some stress is tolerable, even motivating, too much can overwhelm us. Then stress becomes distress and causes us to become emotionally dysfunctional, physically ill, and prematurely gray. It is important to release excess stress, not by taking medications that add toxins (and more stress) to the system and only mask the problem, but by detoxifying our bodies and confronting stress-provoking situations head on. Moreover, we should incorporate relaxation techniques, positive imagery, and use nutrients that promote calm.

Metabolism speeds up during periods of stress. Hence, nutrients are lost at a faster than normal rate and need to be replaced. These include vitamin C, adrenal gland extract, B complex vitamins, particularly pantothenic acid, and a full range of minerals, with an emphasis on phosphorus and calcium.

Meditation takes a little discipline but can yield great rewards. One simple method is to sit or lie quietly for five to ten minutes during the day. Let go of any thoughts that enter into the mind. Concentrate on breathing in positive thoughts and breathing out negative ones. Look for tense points in the face and body, and mentally imagine those tensions draining out. Begin with the foot and work your way up the calves, knees, thighs, and so on. You will feel deeply relaxed and recharged. This is especially good to do first thing in the morning, when first arriving home from work, or just before bedtime.

Positive imagery stimulates the immune system to health, and is a useful adjunct to other therapies, reports Dr. Sinatra: "What happens is people develop endorphins and neurotransmitters which can increase tranquility."

Dr. Sinatra explains how he uses his technique to help others: "When you use guided imagery, the person should be relaxed. Sometimes I'll have the person lie on the floor with a small pillow under the head. Eyes are closed, and there is a focus on breathing. I may ask him or her to say a mantra, sometimes the word "one," or if the person is spiritual, perhaps "The Lord is my Shepherd," whatever is comfortable. I'll put my client in a meditative state where thoughts come in and out but are not focused upon."

Dr. Sinatra then varies the focus of the session according to his client's condition: "One of my patients imagined a shark eating his cancer. He literally imagined it eating away at his Hodgkin's disease...If a person has heart disease, I may ask him or her to imagine a ballet dancer inside the blood vessels, dancing, and at the same time stretching the blood vessels apart.

"Most of the time, I'll ask a person to think of his or her own image as a way of developing personal power. Sometimes it's an animal. One fellow chose an eagle which soared to great heights, taking burdens off of his shoulders. If a patient doesn't want to choose the image, then I'll put him or her in a meditative state and have the person ask for an image to see what the right brain produces. Frequently, people will imagine amazing things."

Dr. Sinatra adds that positive imagery might not work the first time, but that once a person starts getting used to the meditative position with the breathing, the mantra, and the image, he or she starts to see results. Most people look forward to positive imagery sessions and practice it once or twice a day for about 15 minutes.

He also speaks of the multifaceted benefits of exercise: "The brain needs oxygen, and when you exercise you increase the oxygen to the brain. If it's depleted, the brain will stop functioning or it may actually die. Exercise also helps mood. As people become older depression becomes more prevalent. Exercising decreases this problem." Another element of Dr. Winter's program is instruction in biofeedback techniques to teach people how to better control cognitive and emotional functions.

Additionally, there are everyday activities that can enhance brain function for us all. Dr. Winter explains: "Reading, for example, is a technique that stimulates the brain. The more you read, the more this improves brain functioning. There are other things you can do as

well. One is listening to music. For example, youngsters who were going to take an exam listened to music by Mozart about 10 or 15 minutes before their exam. Others listened to a relaxation tape and others to a silent tape. Those people that listened to Mozart about 10 or 15 minutes before their exam performed better and had a higher IQ on their results than those people who listened to a relaxation tape or had a period of silence. So another technique to enforce memory and performance is listening to a certain type of music."