

Stealing Immaturity

Tired of age taking things from you?

Here are 6 ways to arrest your development

by Dena Braun

In today's youth obsessed society where 40 is the new 20, no one wants to look or feel their age, or worse, even older. While aging is an inevitable fact of life, you can reclaim some of the common things it takes from you thanks to new treatments and lifestyle changes.



●●● Up Close and Picture Perfect

Almost like clockwork, people turn 40 and suddenly they're squinting and playing the trombone to read anything with fine print. The term presbyopia, or farsightedness, derives from a Greek word that means "old person," but in those days people retired and bought a home in Florida at the age of 25, so their definition of age was a

bit exaggerated. Biologically, what happens, much like your husband, as the lens in the eye ages, it becomes more and more inflexible. Squinting does work, a little, because you are putting extra pressure on the eyeball to help bend your lens.



Crystal lens replacement (CLR) is a surgical procedure that replaces your natural lens with an implantable variable focus lens. Sounds scary, but this accommodating lens works in conjunction with your eye muscles to allow you to see both up close and at a distance. Currently, the operation is only approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat cataracts, but many ophthalmologists are also using it to treat presbyopia.

"Eighty to 90 percent of people will not need reading glasses after CLR," says Dr. Christopher Coad, medical director at Chelsea Eye Associates in New York City. "The rest would need only mild reading glasses for dim light or extremely up-close situations."

While off-label uses of a procedure are perfectly acceptable, Coad and other eye professionals are reluctant to use CLR on everyone.

"I'm very cautious on operating on someone who has excellent vision and is only doing it to eliminate the need for reading glasses because there is no risk-free surgery," Coad says. "My ideal patient is someone who is over 45 with other vision problems, has a certain pupil size and has no other eye pathology."

●●● The End of Comb-Overs

More than 60 million Americans have thinning hair and over half of men older than 50 have some hair loss.

According to Dr. Antonio Armani, author of *How to Beat Hair Loss*, more than 50 percent of loss is genetic and due to how testosterone forms a combination of chemicals called DHT, which causes hair follicles to fall out. The level of DHT changes as we age. Other triggers for thinning and loss of hair include a diet low in protein or iron, stress, and certain drugs and illnesses.

"If you notice thinning hair, the first thing you should do is see a dermatologist to find the

underlying cause," says Dr. Carolyn Jacob, director of Chicago Cosmetic Surgery & Dermatology. "There are medications for men, like Propecia, that maintain the level of hair you have when you start it."

While there are fewer options for female hair loss, some women find success with Rogaine or Spironolactone, an anti-androgen pill that works by preventing DHT from binding with androgenic receptors.

According to Jacob, biotin supplements also bolster hair growth. Because the strength of supplements isn't regulated, she suggests obtaining them through a physician so you're assured of getting a pharmaceutical strength product.

Phyto, a line of botanical-based hair products, recently launched an anti-aging line to combat thinning hair. Phytodensium shampoo and serum are designed to supply proteins, minerals and essential fatty acids to bring the follicle back to normal size so hair comes in thicker.

"It's the best thing to come out of our lab in 30 years," says Christyn Nawrot, national training manager for Phyto.

●●● Make Every Night Prom Night

It's normal that our interest in sex and ability to perform slow with age, but neither men nor women need to take it lying down. The basic cause in both sexes is a decline in hormones, but how low sex drive and performance are treated is gender specific.

Women: According to Dr. Terry Hoffman of Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, part of a woman's desire for sex is to procreate. When she enters menopause and that need is no longer there, and her hormone level drops, a decline in her interest in sex results.

Because sex generally has an emotional component for women, Hoffman believes that a simple way to increase desire is to increase the fun and foreplay in relationships. To treat the physical causes, she recommends using a testosterone cream designed to allow a woman to both get aroused and orgasm quicker, and lubrication to make sex less painful.

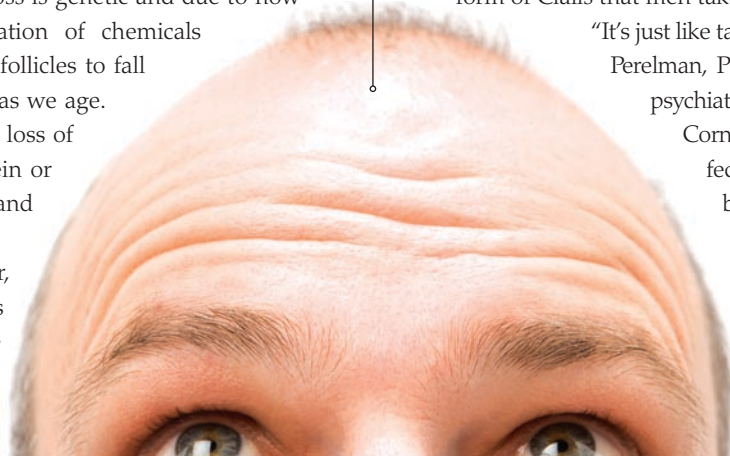
While men have erectile dysfunction drugs, there isn't a miracle pill out there for women yet.

"We function completely differently than men and that will make a pill to treat low sex drive more difficult," Hoffman says. In the interim there is an herbal supplement called Avlimil that she recommends patients try.

Men: The gold standard for treating performance issues are erectile dysfunction drugs. Until now men had to take a pill within 36 hours of having sex, but earlier this year, the FDA approved a form of Cialis that men take once a day.

"It's just like taking a daily vitamin," says Michael Perelman, PhD, clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the Weill Medical College at Cornell University. "It has less side effects and gives a couple spontaneity back in their sex life."

A major drawback is the cost. A monthly supply runs about \$350 and many insurance programs will not cover it.



●●● Smooth as Silk

There isn't a more prominent sign of aging than the dreaded wrinkle. Everyone wants to put his or her best face forward, and a face that is marked with lines and grooves can derail even the most confident. The battle against sagging skin goes back to Cleopatra's time, and throughout the ages new creams, serums and treatments have been touted as the definitive cure.

The newest method is the Fraxel re:pair laser. Approved by the FDA earlier this year, the ablative laser offers quicker recovery and less chance of hypopigmentation (white spots) than previous laser treatments.

The laser works by heating a small portion of the skin at a time. This produces a tightening of the skin, which smoothes away wrinkles.

"Ablative fractional skin resurfacing with the Fraxel re:pair is the biggest breakthrough for wrinkle removal in the last 10 years," says Dr. Christopher Zachery, of the Department of Dermatology at the University of California—Irvine. "The results approach those we can achieve with a face-lift."

●●● Oh My Aching...

One in three adults will get some form of arthritis and more than two-thirds of all cases are in people under age 65.

"It's the number one cause of chronic pain and disability, and just erodes quality of life," says Dr. Jason Theodosakis, assistant professor at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and author of *The Arthritis Cure*.

On the bright side, new research into prevention and treatment can lessen your chances of developing osteoarthritis, and improve functioning if you already have the condition.

"What's new is actually something quite old and something anyone can do," says Dr. Patience White, chief public health officer for the Arthritis Foundation. "The new message is physical activity. It's the best for prevention and it decreases progression of the disease. It's better than any drug we have."

According to White, simply walking or doing light physical activity 30 minutes a day is all it takes to reduce your risk or lower your pain.

"Physical activity is the magic bullet," she says. "It helps arthritis and in so many other diseases. What more do you want?"

Several supplements also have considerable scientific research to back up their use as tools in prevention, according to Theodosakis.

ASU (avocado, soy, unsaponifiable) and glucosamine/chondroitin have both been shown to help prevent arthritis. In an eight-year study of glucosamine/chondroitin, people who used the supplements for one-to-three years were 73 percent less likely to need any type of joint replacement. A newer supplement, hyal-joint pills, which contain hyaluronic acid, is showing great promise, although long-term study data isn't available yet.

Both Theodosakis and White stress the importance of main-



taining a healthy weight, a balanced diet and exercise to keep arthritis at bay.

●●● Don't Forget About It

Misplaced car keys, forgetting names or missing an important date. These little lapses happen to everyone, but as we age, it seems to become more common.

"For each decade of life, our ability to remember declines 2 percent," says Dr. Majid Fotuhi, director for the Center of Memory at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore.

Unfortunately three things happen to the brain as we age that still remain a mystery to doctors. Inflammation in the brain increases, some degree of arteriosclerosis (fatty deposits

in arteries) occurs and amyloid proteins in the brain turn from soluble to insoluble.

In addition to these inevitable changes, obesity, certain medications and illnesses, and a vegetarian diet lacking in protein, iron and B vitamins can contribute to memory problems.

"There are plenty of things people can do to prevent loss of memory," Fotuhi says. "Even the three universal changes are reversible to some extent."

The key to keeping your mind fit revolves around exercise and diet.

"Physical exercise creates healing proteins and increases the blood supply to the brain," Fotuhi says. "Exercise actually increases the brain's volume, which is amazing. Studies also show it reduces amyloids in the brain."

Mental exercise is equally important. It seems that the brain operates on the principal of "use it or lose it." Research shows that brain cells are like muscle cells and have the capacity to grow when used. Activities like sudoku, crossword puzzles and any active learning situations that require problem-solving tone up the brain.

Studies show that what you feed your brain plays a role in how well it functions. Recent research showed that eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables cut the risk of Alzheimer's disease by 60 to 80 percent. Eating foods rich in omega 3 fatty acids also helps the brain by reducing inflammation in the body. ☺

