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The Time Bandits

To hold on to your looks and keep your edge through the years, you need to make sure the keyage indicators fall in your favor

BY DAVID ZINCZENKO

FOR MOST OF US, our 20s are a time of figuring out who we are, struggling through identity crises while working menial jobs to pay for our hovels and suffering fools who think they're wiser than we are because they're older. But hit your 30s, and everything begins to make sense. You have that delicate balance of youth and gravitas (not to mention a little extra cash). Everything looks and feels just as it should.

Of course, that's also when you have to make a decision: Is age going to be your friend or your enemy? Up to this point, your youthful looks have held you back. Now that you're in full flower, you want to extend your heyday as long as possible. And that's a lot easier for men to accomplish than women. Guys like Sean Connery and Michael Douglas can go on playing the romantic lead into their 50s and beyond, while actresses have to abandon ingenue roles after age 25. Why? Men gain character as they age; it can actually make them look better.

Thankfully, there's no reason you can't, too. While the typical guy starts to show the first signs of aging not long after reaching full maturity, there's no reason further decline can't be halted indefinitely. "The human body is designed to live 110 years," says Ben Douglas, Ph.D., professor of anatomy at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson and author of *AgeLess: Living Younger Longer*. "It's possible to look young and vital well into old age."

The science is simple. While you can coast with good genetics through the first few decades of life, lifestyle factors take over from there, becoming much more significant when it comes to stay-

ing, and looking, young. "You can be healthier in your 40s and beyond than you are in your 20s, if you're smart about it," says James Webster, M.D., director of the Buehler Center of Aging at Northwestern University.

Here are 16 ways to prevent, slow or reverse the signs of aging—and keep your splendid looks.

■ **Renovate your face.** If wrinkles start emerging, ask your doctor about Renova, a prescription cream that helps smooth them out. Developed by Johnson & Johnson, it

contains a form of vitamin A called *tretinoin*. Unlike Retin-A and over-the-counter alpha-hydroxy acids—which work on the skin's surface—Renova is said to work deeper in the skin, where pigment changes occur and fine wrinkling begins. In studies, 65 percent of patients showed a reduction of wrinkling and brown spots with Renova.

■ **Camouflage wrinkles.** The simplest way to hide lines in your face is to get a short haircut, says Kenneth Battelle, master stylist and owner of Kenneth's Salon in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. "The lines around the face are downward, and long hair accentuates those creases." He recommends clipping your hair to a length of 1 inch.

■ **Stop misusing moisturizer.** Even the best moisturizer won't work on dry skin. These products are designed to trap moisture in damp skin, says Seth L. Matarasso, M.D., assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Califor-

Fight aging before the mirror betrays you



nia, San Francisco, School of Medicine. Wet your face with water and put on a moisturizer. The water and the moisturizer penetrate below the surface and into the pores, where it seals the skin and temporarily smoothes fine wrinkles. ■ **Eat like a Sicilian.** Garlic may prolong the life of human skin. According to a recent study in Denmark, skin cells treated with garlic had seven times the number of cell lines grown in a standard culture medium. Garlic-treated cells also looked healthier and more "youthful" than untreated cells. And garlic extract drastically inhibited the growth of cancerous cells. Now, we're not recommending you concoct a garlic facial cream. But adding a few cloves to your meals, or taking a garlic supplement, couldn't hurt.

■ **Get sand-blasted.** A new cosmetic dentistry device can remove tooth stains in minutes, restoring the white of your youth. It uses a video camera that spots micro cracks and hidden decay, which can then be sprayed away with air/abrasive technology. The procedure removes stains in a few seconds with a concentrated blast of aluminum oxide, a safe gas. "Under the stain there's healthy tooth, you just stop and seal it," says Ronald Goldstein, D.D.S., author of *Change Your*

Smile, who reported his findings last year in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. "It's a new way of finding and stopping decay long before invasive surgery is needed." The procedure costs a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

■ **Watch your brow, bro.** Eyebrows that once stayed where they belonged can start growing out in all directions once we reach our 30s. Every few days, take a minute to seek out and clip off wayward hairs, says John Romano, M.D., a dermatologist with New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center.

■ **Put a lid on it.** If you're concerned with premature graying, wear a hat when you're in the sun. One theory holds that the sun's ultraviolet rays cause pigment cells on your scalp to work overtime. That could make them burn out early.

■ **Lighten up.** If your hair is thinning, consider having it professionally highlighted, says Battelle. "Blond hair doesn't look as thin as black hair when you're balding, since it's closer to the color of your scalp," he says. "And going a shade or two lighter gives the illusion of life to your hair."

■ **Take a deep breath.** Lung capacity starts to diminish in your late 20s, and this—besides sapping your energy—can cause your lungs to shrink by one-third of current capacity by the time you're in your 70s. But something as simple as

taking deep breaths several times a day—anything that helps you breathe in and out as deeply as possible—can minimize the lung damage dramatically.

"If you do this every day and don't smoke, by age 70, you'll have the lungs of a 45-year old," says Douglas.

■ **Stand tall.** "You can take a 70-year-old who stands straight, looks alert, and walks with a steady gait and he'll look decades younger," says Douglas. "And a 40-year-old who slumps and shuffles looks like he's on his way out." To maintain a perfect posture, try this exercise. Stand against a wall, making sure that your shoulders and buttocks touch the

wall. Slip your arm into the space between your lower back and the wall, and tilt your hips so that the extra space is eliminated. Hold the position for a count of 20. Do that exercise once a day for three weeks to ensure that good posture becomes a habit.

■ **Water down your back.** With age, the disks in the back begin to lose fluid, which is part of the reason old guys have bowed backs. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day to keep fluid stores replenished.

■ **Strengthen your carriage.** The following exercise strengthens the back, abdominal and gluteal (or butt) muscles—essential muscles

A 70-year-old who stands straight and walks with a steady gait looks decades younger than his true age.

for maintaining good posture. And it does so all in one move. First, lie facedown, hands at shoulder level—as you would a pushup. Keeping your hips against floor, straighten your arms to lift your upper body. Return slowly to the starting position. If you can do this 10 times



LARRY SPENT SO MUCH TIME CHANGING THE MUSIC AT HIS PARTY THAT THE GUESTS BEGAN ASKING, "WHO'S LARRY?"

try doing the exercise with no hands, arms held against your sides. Once you've mastered 10 repetitions, you're ready to try it with your hands beneath your chin and your elbows out. Finally, work up to 10 repetitions in the "Superman" position: hips against the floor, chest up, arms extended directly in front of you. (Do not carry Lois Lane in this position.)

■ **Bolster your shoulders.** Aside from the knees and back, nothing is injured more than the shoulders, says Allan M. Levy, M.D., team physician for the New York Giants and, formerly, the New Jersey Nets and New York Islanders. "As you age, your shoulders are likely to narrow as you lose muscle mass there quickly," he says. Countering these effects is simple. Strengthen the shoulders with shoulder presses, but also target your rotator-cuff muscles. Here's how. Grasp a light dumbbell with your right hand and hold it straight in front of you. Slowly rotate the entire arm inward (as if you're pouring a beer), then outward. Do 10 repetitions. Then try the same movement with your left arm at different angles to work the entire circle. Repeat, using your left arm.

■ **Sleep your way to greatness.** Chronic sleep deprivation can permanently age you. Just look at our last few presidents. "Four years in that office does a 10-year job on their looks," says Douglas. That's because your body releases its greatest concentration of growth hormone—the substance that helps build strength and repairs damaged tissue—during sleep.

"When you get enough rest, you're more likely to perform at optimal levels and to maintain other healthy behaviors, such as exercise and a good diet," says Michael Vitiello, Ph.D., associate director of the Sleep and Aging Research Program at the University of Washington in Seattle. "Combine sleep with these other behaviors, and all those things we associate with youth—appearance, energy and attitude—will ultimately improve."

■ **Stretch the important muscles.** Okay, so you really dislike stretching. Make that *hate* stretching. But preventing a loss in flexibility is crucial, since it tapers at about the same rate as other major measures of aging—about 1 percent a year. For many men, that decline can start during the 20s. Do this simple two-step stretch to work

both your back and hamstrings—the two muscle groups most likely to be stiffened by sitting at your desk all day.

Lie on your back and draw your knees to your chest. Hold for 30 seconds. This stretches the lower back. Now put both feet flat on the floor, knees bent, and raise your left leg straight up. Hold for 30 seconds, then repeat with the right leg. This stretches the hamstrings without putting strain on your back, the way similar sitting stretches do.

■ **Let someone do you.** We're talking about your nails, pal. As you age, your nails start to get brittle, and ridges develop from the tip of the nail to the cuticle. Nails also become less flexible and are more prone to snags and breaks. Once past a certain age, you ought to be secure enough in your masculinity to consult a manicurist once in a while, especially if you're in sales or another "meet and greet" profession. A manicurist can remove ridges and retard peeling by buffing and polishing the nail surface. Just tell the manicurist not to push back the cuticles—they protect the growth center of the nail. ♦

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