

What Lies Beneath

By Sandie Fredriksson

Sandie Fredriksson is the creator of Healthy Habits for Life. She teaches busy women how to lose weight, have more energy and put their health on autopilot.



From medical-grade facials to body sculpting machines, there are plenty of shortcuts available to help us look younger and slimmer, but what's going on under the surface?

The desire to look younger than our years has never been stronger. Glowing skin, shiny hair, a lean and toned body: these are things that many of us strive for as we age. And just like the rest of the animal kingdom, we are biologically wired to see these visual markers as indicators of good health.

We are also more time-poor than ever. As I moved into my forties, a sixty-hour work week, combined with the responsibilities of being a single mother, left me little time or energy for the gym or cooking from scratch. Calling for a restaurant table or ordering a takeaway had become an easy default habit.

Thankfully, my city salary meant I could take full advantage of all the treatments cosmetic clinics had to offer. What started out as a little tweak here and there soon became an obsession with all the latest procedures on the market. Monthly hydrafacials, collagen-stimulating lasers and quarterly botox; it was like I had converted to a new religion. And as my wish list grew in line with advancements in technology, so did my laziness when it came to paying attention to my health.

Grateful for the compliments I was getting, I embraced ‘forty is the new thirty’ as my new mantra. I felt invincible. But I couldn’t have been more wrong. I wasn’t ageing well at all - not on the inside anyway. At just 44, I was blindsided by a breast cancer diagnosis, which I am now certain was a lifestyle-related cancer. This was a wake-up call in the hardest of ways but in hindsight, I should have seen something coming.

The mistake I made was prioritising the way I looked over the way I felt. I may have been able to spend my way to the exterior of a slim(ish) thirty-something, but a toxic lack of healthy behaviours meant that my body was functioning like someone far older than my chronological age.

You might think your risk of disease is down to luck or genes, but it isn’t as straightforward as that. How you exercise, the food you eat, your quality of sleep and the way you handle stress; it all matters. There’s a lot you can do to change the way you feel and the way you look.

The world of aesthetics is advancing at an exciting pace but so is the science of ageing and today we have the chance to make the most of both as we reinvent what it means to get older.

Joining the dots

After breast cancer, there was no going back to my old lifestyle so I left my job in the city to study nutrition and become a health coach. Driven by a mission to help other women avoid making the same mistakes as I did, I also sought out cosmetic physicians who were not afraid to give their patients practical lifestyle advice.

Leading body contouring specialist Dr Gaylna Selezneva is a pioneering industry voice when it comes to the beauty-wellness connection. Despite being on speed dial to a number of royals and top celebrities she does not shy away from encouraging her patients to get honest about how their lifestyle is impacting their health as well as their appearance.

“This double-pronged approach to beauty should be industry standard,” insists Dr Galyna. “I want to achieve the best possible results for my patients so the everyday lifestyle choices they make; what they eat, how much water they drink, how they exercise... all need to go hand in hand with the work that I do.”

Something we both see with our clients is a chronic under-consumption of water and yet staying hydrated is one of the most effective ways to uplevel your health and appearance, and for the least amount of effort. As soon as my clients get on board with the hydration target I set them, they are quick to report increased energy, reduced brain fog and weight loss as well as plumper skin and brighter eyes.

The rise of the machines

With Fat freezing (Coolsculpting) and muscle-toning devices (EMSCULPT) giving impressive results with little pain or downtime, it's no surprise they might be more appealing over getting up early to hit the gym in the morning. But at what cost? Whilst we're admiring our reduced muffin tops or perkier bottoms, are we forgetting the benefits we would get from the workouts that would have got us there naturally? Such as, lower risk of disease, stronger bones, healthy brain function and improved mobility, not to mention boosting your mood and improving your sex drive.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a huge advocate of the increasingly advanced technology that cosmetic clinics have to offer. And I still rely on botox to keep my frown lines in check... which is not something I feel the need to stop just because my job title says 'health coach'. But my experiences have taught me that any treatments I undergo need to be in addition to looking after myself from the inside - not instead of it.

"I am not interested in offering quick and easy fixes to replace a healthy lifestyle," agrees Dr Galyna. "I prefer to take a 360 approach and include the biggest beauty secret, which is the benefits of wellness from within."

Deciding to tweak and treat their appearance is something many women find empowering and most of us simply want to look like healthier more rested versions of ourselves. But how you eat, drink and think today will affect what you look and feel like tomorrow and investing in yourself with a personal trainer, dietician or a health coach can be a valuable component for your own full-circle strategy.

Supplements, powders and potions

The older you get, the more likely you are to be experiencing deficiencies in your body, no matter how healthy and balanced your diet, and if you are coveting a healthy glow, it requires paying attention to your wellbeing at a cellular level. Supplementing with vitamins, minerals, green powders, protein shakes and adaptogenic herbs as worthy components of any ageing-well strategy.

This is not about wasting money on the latest detox tea (please don't do that) or stockpiling expensive bottles of capsules you'll forget to take - without the right guidance, that rabbit hole is a deep one! Instead, I recommend taking a more targeted approach which is

why I use an in-depth set of blood tests with my clients, to create their personalised protocol. Getting this right not only helps your body to function effectively but can also mean fewer wrinkles and a brighter complexion. There's a reason vitamin C is one of the key ingredients found in so many anti-ageing serums.

Your everyday habits matter

The combination of busy schedules and accessible and affordable cosmetic procedures can make it easy to give up on a holistic approach to beauty as you get older. It's not a lack of education about the benefits of exercise or what food is and isn't good for you that drives people to the beauty counter or clinic instead of the gym or the fruit bowl. As humans, we tend to be attracted to the path of least resistance. The path that takes the least amount of time, the least amount of willpower, and will cause us the least amount of discomfort.

But our bodies are an interconnected system, and studies show that our appearance and our internal health are inextricably linked. The good news is that the smallest of behaviour changes can create powerful results and set you on a new wellness trajectory very quickly. And with a bit of research or with the help of a professional, making better choices every day does not have to feel overwhelming.

Beauty from the inside out is one thing, but ageing well is not just about appearance. If your goal is to look and feel younger for longer and maximise your healthspan as well as your lifespan, head to a trail-blazing new platform for women called The Beauty Triangle. The monthly events and podcast are an inspiring indication of how this landscape is changing.

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