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## PROFILE

### What A Babe!

Prolonging Youth - Defying Age

Not long ago, Barbara Morris was able to communicate her attitude toward aging just by opening her mouth. It wasn't so much what she said—though this 71-year-old is not shy in expressing her views—it was how she said it. Through a mouthful of braces. “At the tender age of 69, I got braces on my teeth and it was a fantastic experience,” she says. “That was effectively thumbing my nose at one of the major tenets of the ‘Religion of Chronological Age’ that holds sway in our society and that is ‘To act your age.’”



But, braces aren't the only way Barbara has discovered to flout the notion of age-imposed limitations. She also works full time, up to 12-hour shifts, as a pharmacist for a major national chain and has “no plans to retire.” She just finished a book, *Put Old On Hold: The Only Guide You Will Ever Need To Get From Baby Boomer To Whatababer*, which seeks to change the way people think about aging. And, she and a like-minded friend recently launched a website, [www.whatababe.net](http://www.whatababe.net), as an informational exchange site and forum for presenting her philosophy on life. (Visitors to her site will find a link to the Life Extension Foundation website.)

“I can't explain just how great life is at age 71—to be in such great health and to be able to work and be productive,” she says in a rare moment of calm from her home in San Diego. “I feel like the energizer bunny.”

Barbara's decision not to become “old” began as a child growing up with a mother who suffered from low blood sugar and its resulting mood swings. Her early weapons in the fight against age were bran, determination and the writings of Linus Pauling, who earned public scorn with his early advocacy of vitamin C in a series of books published in the 1960s. Barbara developed a long-standing interest in exercise, picking up ice skating as a child in the Northeast, then taking up yoga when she reached her 30s. “It's amazing that your body never forgets the yoga positions,” she says. “To this day, my favorite way to sit is in the Lotus position.”

But, at the same time that she was opening her mind to the possibilities of prolonging youth, she had to learn to reconcile that outlook with her family indoctrination in traditional medicine—namely pharmacy. “My father had the old corner drugstore and four of his seven kids became pharmacists,” she says. “In many respects it can be painful to be dispensing medications to people that I don't think are really being helped by them, so I try to help in any other way that I can.”

She often recommends vitamin supplements and also helps by sharing her expertise and outlook on her website and through her book (which can be downloaded from the site). In both mediums she explores a variety of health topics ranging from retirement (“It contributes to premature aging”) to forestalling aging by avoiding negative self talk (“If you tell yourself you are getting old often enough, you'll get there sooner than you should”).

Barbara already has a significant subscriber base and has been able to connect with a number of other 60-plus-year-old women who also work full time. But unfortunately, these women tend to be the exception. Barbara says the typical Whatababe (the term applies to both men and women) candidate is not someone in her own age bracket, but more likely a baby boomer. “Boomers are usually more open in their mind-set,” she explains. “They want to stay young and are willing to listen to advice.”

Barbara's personal plan for staying young and energetic naturally includes exercise. Her bedroom doubles as a home gym with a treadmill, which she calls one of the greatest things she's ever purchased, a stepper and all manner of weight-training equipment. She makes the rounds at least three times a week, spending about 30 minutes on an aerobic workout and another 30 on muscle strengthening. Regular isometrics help keep her posterior from “drooping to the back of my knees,” just as stretching exercises keep Barbara flexible and sitting up straight.



Her diet strategy would likely be a radical shift for most Americans, but she says it has evolved over many years, due in part to a hectic work schedule in which “drinking” a meal proved faster and easier than a sit-down alternative. The trick is to eat little, but make it count. “I really agree that people who eat less, live longer,” she emphasizes. “I feel much better when I eat less.” Breakfast tends to be eggs, fruit, toast and plenty of vitamins washed down by a soy concoction. Lunch and on-the-job snacks are usually carrot juice—a better picker-upper than caffeine—and protein drinks. Barbara’s standard dinner is homemade oatmeal, garnished with ground flaxseed, a drizzle of honey and soy milk. Indeed, soy products, including tofu, miso, flour, chips, nuts, soy milk and soy burgers are a dietary mainstay. Low in fat and high in fiber and protein, soy helps strengthen bones, may help fight cancer and even produces some of the same traits as a mild estrogen dosage, avoiding the need for hormone replacement therapy.

Throughout the day, Barbara drinks glass after glass of water, usually a gallon in total, which not only helps take the edge off her appetite but also stimulates general good health. “In counseling customers, I always ask them how much water they drink and it amazes me to hear how many people respond that they don’t like water,” she says. “But the human body is 90% water, so to deny yourself the ability to replenish that is criminal.”

Supplements and vitamins have been an integral weapon in Barbara’s battle against aging for at least 40 years. She begins every day with a green drink, fortified with a scoop of calcium ascorbate crystals. Later in the morning, she drinks a mix of chlorophyll, bran and psyllium to “keep my gut clean.” She throws extra vitamin C (in a crystal form called calcium ascorbate) into her drinking water throughout the day. In addition to its many health benefits, vitamin C may be the ultimate beauty vitamin. “It has kept my skin looking great for my age. I know I’m on the right track because in recent years vitamin C has become a standard addition to many cosmetic products,” she says. So when a recent purchase of ascorbic acid powder (vitamin C) proved too gritty and bitter tasting to swallow, Barbara tried it instead as a facial scrub—and reports excellent results.

Barbara relies on daily doses of glucosamine and methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) to provide additional insurance against bone and joint degeneration. “I had almost resigned myself to a painful knee, until I tried this combination,” she says. Then there’s Ginkgo biloba, which is a must for memory and brain function and Barbara finds the results impressive: “I’m not supposed to have an incredible memory at my age, but I remember my customers’ names, as well as the kind of medications they are taking, from years back.”

Barbara’s list of vitamins and supplements is fluid—compiled by her own years of experimentation. “There are so many contradictory claims about which supplements are necessary and how much of them to take, that you need to go through a lot of trial and error to determine what’s right for you,” she advises. It takes her about ten minutes to assemble everything she’s going to take from the 40-some-odd bottles she keeps.

Barbara does something else important that keeps her feeling youthful—she spends time in the company of young people. “The technicians at the pharmacy are usually young and I learn a lot from them,” she says. “They keep me in touch with the real world, and help keep me in the proper mind-set. I really learn a lot from them.”

Because retirement isn’t on the horizon and because “vacation” is an unwelcome concept, Barbara doesn’t have a lot of free time. When not immersed in her typically demanding daily routine, she can be found reading the latest health-related publication or teaching her two grandchildren, four and seven, how to ice skate at the local indoor rink. “It’s really wonderful to be this age and still feel like playing with my grandchildren,” she says. “I think they help keep me young too.”

—Twig Mowatt



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