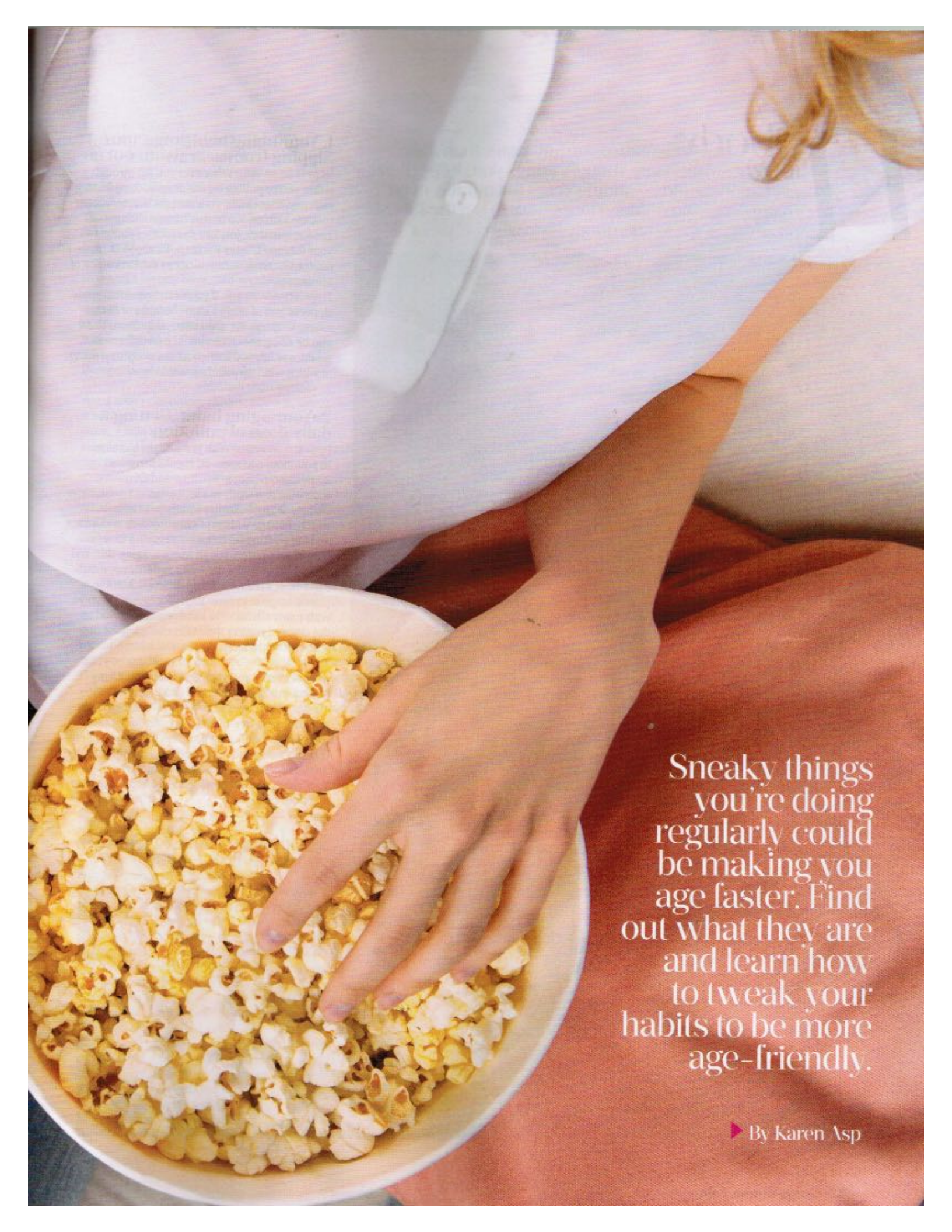


7 habits that age you

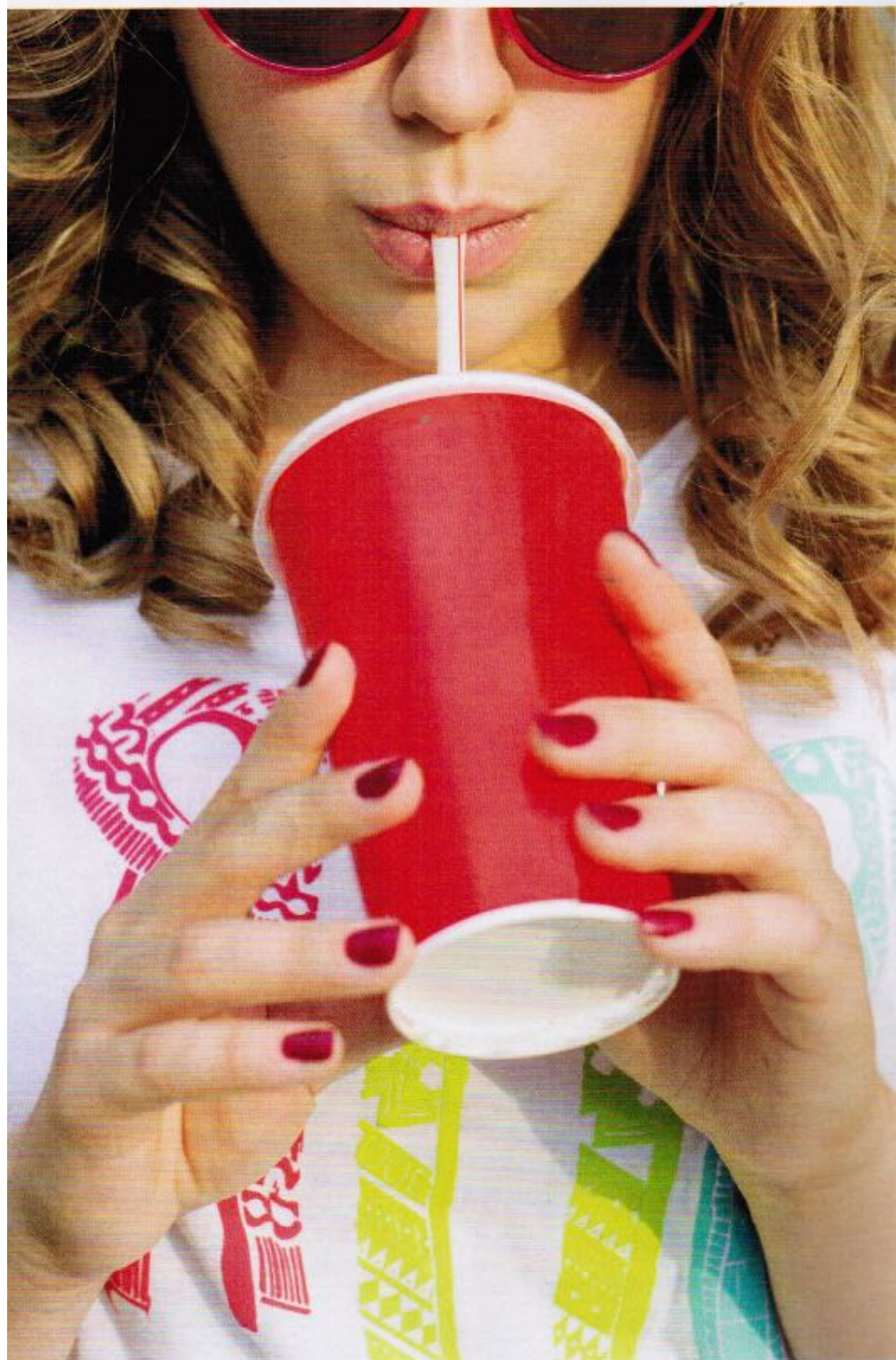


A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, sitting on a red surface. She is holding a white bowl filled with popcorn. Her right hand is resting on the popcorn. The image is used as a background for text.

Sneaky things
you're doing
regularly could
be making you
age faster. Find
out what they are
and learn how
to tweak your
habits to be more
age-friendly.

► By Karen Asp

nobody wants to age any faster than they have to. Surprisingly, though, things you do, perhaps even daily, could be adding years to your life, even making you look older. Here's how to put the kibosh on seven of these seemingly harmless behaviors.



1. Your aging habit: Sipping from a straw

HOW IT AGES YOU: Whenever you sip through a straw, you're pulling on the muscle, the orbicularis oris, that circles your mouth. "As you repeat this, the skin on top of that muscle changes so you get burrows, just like the creases you get in your forehead," says Ronda S. Farah, M.D., assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Minnesota.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: If you're an occasional straw sipper or you're using a straw because of dental issues, keep sipping. Otherwise, skip them. You'll also be doing the environment a favor because Americans use 500 million straws every day, many of which wind up polluting waterways.

2. Your aging habit: Getting a daily dose of pollution

HOW IT AGES YOU: With just a slight increase in pollution, age spots on cheeks increased by 25 percent in people in China and Germany, according to a study in the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. "Pollution equals free radicals, which damage your skin's healthy cells and attack and kill elastin and collagen, resulting in wrinkles, discoloration, rough texture, aging skin and even skin cancer," says Amanda Sanzone, medical aesthetician with Dr. Matthew Schulman, a plastic surgeon in New York City. Sanzone works with many clients who have recently moved to the city and notices their skin changing for the worst after just a few weeks, she adds.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Add antioxidants to your daily skin-care regimen, Sanzone says. Using ingredients like vitamins C and E, grapeseed extract, green tea and resveratrol will help fight pollution and free-radical damage on the skin. Also, while exfoliating products like scrubs, alpha hydroxy acids and retinol are OK, use them in moderation because over-exfoliation can weaken your skin's natural barrier and lead to more damage from pollution.

3. Your aging habit: Sleeping on your side or stomach

HOW IT AGES YOU: Whenever you sleep on your side or stomach, you're creating imbalances in your body, Farah says. Side sleepers who prefer one side over the other can lose facial volume or even change the shape on that side of their face. Wrinkles also can form when you smash your face into a pillow, even if it's just on one side, thanks to the weight of your head pressing on facial skin.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Sleeping on your back is best. Yet because it can be tough for side and stomach sleepers to train themselves to be back sleepers, at least switch positions. If you always sleep on your right side, for instance, sleep on your left and vice versa. Or when you're on your stomach, rotate your head from one side to another so you take pressure off your face.

4. Your aging habit: Taking on too much at work

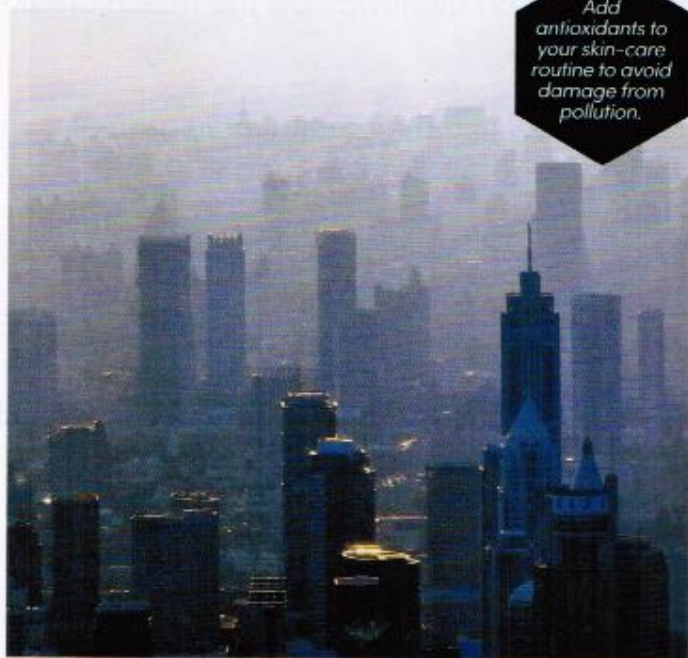
HOW IT AGES YOU: Being stressed at work could lead to work-related exhaustion, which could accelerate your rate of biological aging. That's what researchers concluded in a study from *PLOS ONE* after studying more than 2,900 men and women aged 30 to 64. Those with the most severe exhaustion, experiencing high stress on a weekly basis, had greater biological aging, shown through shorter telomeres, caps at the end of your DNA. "Chronic work stress may make your body age faster than it normally would," says Kirsi Ahola, Ph.D., lead study author from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in Helsinki.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Although short periods of stress aren't damaging, chronic stress is, which is why you should monitor your well-being at work, Ahola says. If you're having problems sleeping or controlling your emotions or experiencing aches and pains for no reason, you might be taking on too much at work. If possible, lighten that load. Not going to happen? At least take better care of yourself by sleeping enough and following healthy lifestyle habits. Most important, allow time to recover each day from stress, which means no working after hours at home, no continuous overtime, and allowing time for relaxation and social and physical activities.

5. Your aging habit: Not logging the sleep you need

HOW IT AGES YOU: Lack of sleep is associated with numerous health issues, including increased risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity. Now add facial aging to that list. Among women aged 30 to 49, signs of aging, including acceleration of fine lines, increased vulnerability to dehydrated skin and uneven skin tone, were twice as great in women who reported sleeping less than five hours a night for at least a month versus women who reported more than seven hours a night of sleep for at least a month, according to a study from Estée Lauder and University Hospitals Case Medical Center.

Add antioxidants to your skin-care routine to avoid damage from pollution.



Establish a work/life balance and take time to recharge.



THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Work to get at least seven hours of sleep a night. That's not always easy, of course, so follow these strategies from W. Chris Winter, M.D., board-certified sleep medicine specialist in Charlottesville, Virginia, and author of *The Sleep Solution* (Berkeley, 2017): Set aside time to sleep by setting a schedule and sticking with it, keep your sleep schedule as consistent as possible ("It'll help maximize deep sleep, which in turn maximizes growth-hormone secretion that keeps you youthful," he says.), eliminate sleeping pills and/or alcohol from your nighttime routine, start your day with exercise and meditate before bed.

6. Your aging habit: Shedding the pounds

HOW IT AGES YOU: If there's one downside to weight loss, it's this: When you lose weight, you often lose volume in your face, especially on your cheekbones and chin, which can work against you. "Loss of volume in the face is one of the major things that makes you look older," Farah says.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Talk with a board-certified dermatologist or plastic surgeon about re-volumizing your face with fillers. Doing so may stimulate your body to make collagen, a protein that helps give your skin strength and elasticity, which can help with future aging prevention, Farah says. You'll have better success if you use fillers in your 30s and 40s versus when you're older, she adds. Start with reversible fillers versus permanent fillers. The reversible type uses hyaluronic acid, which can be easily dissolved if you don't like the results.

7. Your aging habit: Binge watching your favorite shows

HOW IT AGES YOU: Catching up with your Netflix shows might be your favorite time of day, but it could cost you — 21.8 minutes. That's how much a study in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* revealed you shave off your life for every hour of TV you watch after age 25. Worse? Watching TV six hours a day on average throughout life equates to living 4.8 years less than people who watch no TV. "TV is a sedentary activity, which raises the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, stroke and diabetes," says Lennert Veerman, Ph.D., lead study author from the Cancer Council in Australia.

THE ANTI-AGING FIX: Limit TV time to no more than two hours a day. Other studies have suggested that up to two hours a day doesn't add much to your risk, Veerman says. One caveat? If you're very active during the day, you can get away with watching a little more. ➔