

# The Beach Beauty Diary

In just eight weeks, can one woman transform her baby-boomer bod to beach-ready status?



**S**HORTS DON'T LIE. THE BELOVED O'NEILLS THAT USED TO hang gracefully at my hips now sit at my waist, a clear sign of creeping winter weight. As long as I'm obsessing, what about my hair? Swimming laps has left it dry, and I'm convinced the chlorine has made my skin extra pale and pasty. To make matters worse, my heels are so rough and cracked that I routinely find holes in the bottoms of my tights. Clearly, some head-to-toe beauty rehab is in order if my aging baby-boomer self is to become beach-worthy by summer. If I can round up the right posse of experts to help me, I should be able to pull this off in eight weeks, no?

## WEEK 1

My current routine of leisurely lap swimming obviously isn't cutting it. I consider: When I took up weight lifting about 15 years ago, the results showed up fast. Friends envied my well-cut arms, and I got stronger. It's time to revisit the weight room, so I e-mail my former trainer Dan Cordle in Manhattan. I realize I haven't been near a barbell in four years. Uh oh.

Workout No. 1 finds me huffing and puffing my way through what should be an easy 15-minute bike and treadmill cardio warm-up, followed by 45 minutes of weights. I get through it (barely), from leg presses (dreaded) to upright rows (my fave), and set up twice-weekly sessions for the weeks to follow. I see no reason for Dan to bear witness to my pitiful cardio efforts—it's just too embarrassing—so I promise to fill out my workout program with longer bouts on my own. I think back to my gym-rat days of yore (aka my 40s), when a 30-minute treadmill run was just part of my typical workout, not the sum total. Sigh.

## WEEK 2

"Overall, this looks pretty good, but there are lots of little extras throughout." Dietitian Rebecca Fuller, R.D., is going over my food diary. (I've told her my goal: to drop at least five pounds.) "That 2 percent yogurt with honey—you'd do better with 0 percent yogurt and fresh fruit." She notes the glazed donut I nibbled at a press event, the nightly chocolate. "I tell my clients to remember: Every day is not a special day." Here I was expecting glowing feedback on my oh-so-healthy eating. Inwardly, I vow to adopt Fuller's words as my mantra—most days. Maybe the weekends can be "special."

## WEEK 3

Post workout, I'm shaving my legs, trying to remove some tiny, recalcitrant hairs, only to realize these are not hairs—they are spider veins. I make an appointment at the aptly named ➤

Vein Treatment Center, directed by vascular surgeon Dr. Luis Navarro, M.D. Kay, Dr. Navarro's assistant, describes the protocol to come: sclerotherapy. "There will be bruising and possibly redness," she warns me. A detergent-based solution is injected in the offending veins, irritating the vessels and causing them to collapse and disappear. Needles. Oh joy.

#### WEEK 4

There are 112 calories in 16 roasted almonds, 35 in a medium tomato, and 119 in a 6-ounce serving of Côtes du Rhône. I know all this and more thanks to MyFitnessPal, a diet- and fitness-tracking app Fuller has recommended. I can't begin to describe the dreariness of inputting every last morsel one has consumed each day, but she says most people underestimate their daily intake by hundreds of calories. Yup.

Later that week: vein-eradication day. Kay has explained that I will feel blasts of freezing, pain-minimizing air as I am injected. And so it begins, a cold whoosh followed by a weird buzzing feeling tracing along my thigh. (That would be the needle—not that I dare watch.) Ten minutes later, a nurse wraps my legs in elastic compression bandages I'm instructed to wear for two hours. My legs feel like they're shrink-wrapped—as though two giant kielbasas are carrying me along as I trundle off to the subway. The next morning, Dan asks me how my cardio is going. I change the subject.

#### WEEK 5

Finally, some downward movement on the scale. Fuller reminds me that weight loss is particularly challenging for people who are just looking to lose those annoying last few pounds. Like Dan, she suggests that I up my cardio, so I join a boot camp class—anything to avoid treadmill tedium.

To handle the task of transforming my dry, callused feet, I'm putting my faith in Baby Foot, an exfoliating system from Japan. The deal is this: two gel-filled, glycolic-acid-based plastic

booties one wears for an hour; then, over the next week or two, watching as copious amounts of dead skin are shed, resulting in newly kitten-soft feet. I spend an afternoon at home squishing across the floor in the Baby Foot "sock packs." The combo of slippery, loose-fitting plastic booties and a jiggling layer o' gel beneath my feet is unsettling, so I pull a pair of hiking socks over the booties for more stability. Then, after an hour, I wash my feet with soap and water, and look forward to a couple of weeks from now when the massive shedding of calloused skin is supposed to occur. The suspense!

#### WEEK 6

A glowy spray tan has always been my default beauty pick-me-up, and what better time than now, when I'm feeling weary from working out and calorie counting? I've decided to try a special "sculpted" tan at Brazil Bronze Glow Bar in New York City. I'm sprayed from head to toe with an icy-cold tanning mist, followed by a second helping along the sides of my torso and legs for a slimming, contoured effect. I look healthier and sleeker, the post-sclerotherapy bruising is camouflaged, and, best of all, my normally blotchy skin looks so even-toned I can skip foundation.

#### WEEK 7

All week, the removal of socks or tights has been accompanied by a blizzard of dead, dry skin. Gross, but thrilling. Speaking of dead and dry, I'm about to try the intriguing Phyto Secret de Nuit plant-based "intense hydration regenerating night treatment" for hair. A potion that promises to ready my strands for a summer's worth of sun and salt water while I sleep? Yes!

#### WEEK 8

One leg has a few patches of redness and a couple of discolored spots at the spider-vein injection sites. "It usually disappears in a few days," Dr. Navarro tells me. "But you're at the other end of the spectrum." It turns out I'm what they call a slow healer, so it may take a few months for these lingering spots to disappear. But my before and after pictures reveal huge changes already, so I can be patient. And my chlorine-ravaged hair does feel healthier—plus, I never thought it was possible for the soles of my feet to be so pristine. I didn't meet my five-pound goal, but I've consistently weighed three to four pounds less over the past three weeks, and it's good to see my biceps again. My grand experiment? So worth it. ☑

