

# Age in Reverse!

**Nicholas Perricone, M.D., reveals how to boost “the beauty molecule” to reduce inflammation, boost energy and turn back the clock—in as little as 3 days! BY MIREL ZAMAN**

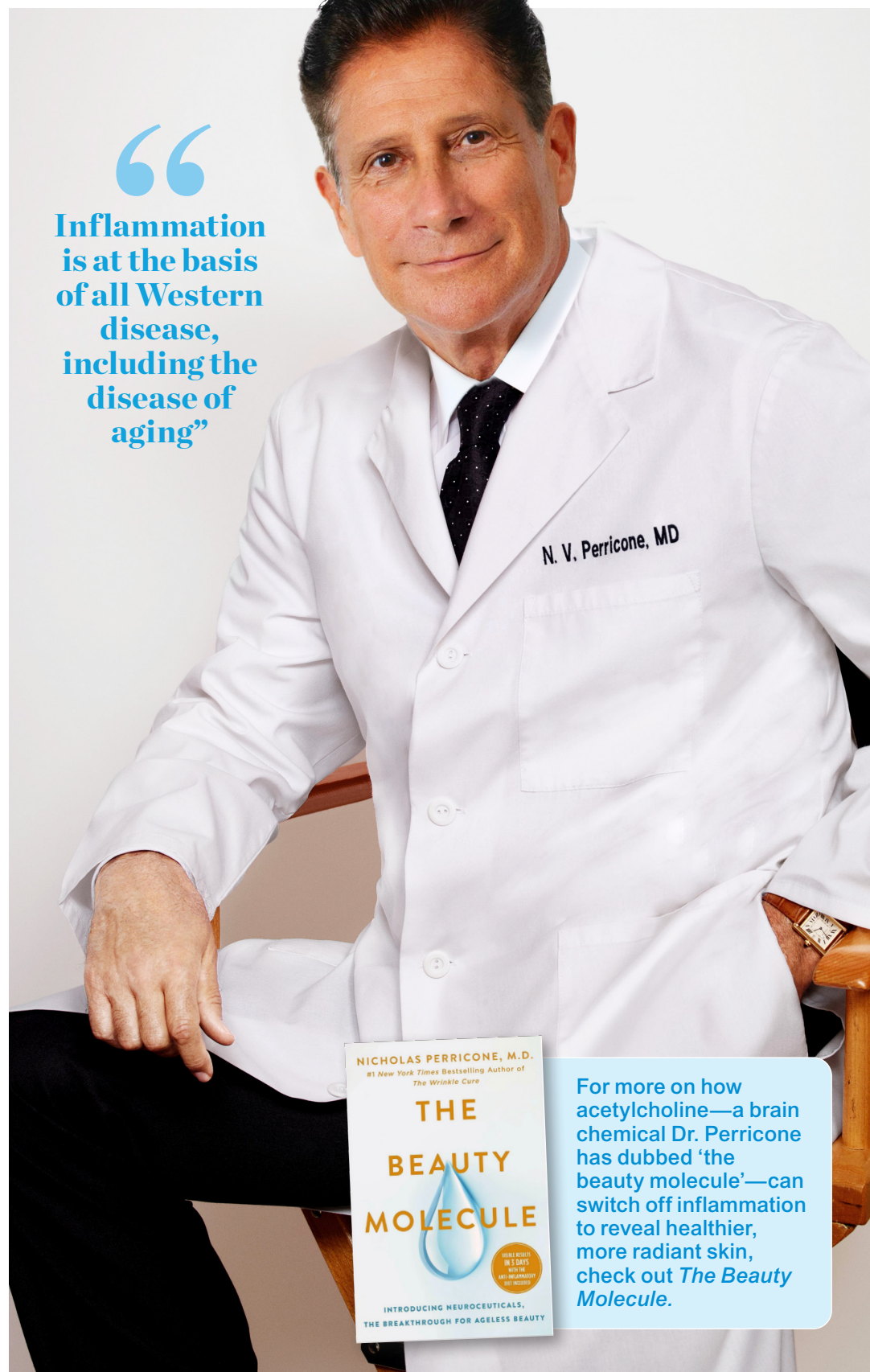
**N**icholas Perricone, M.D., is used to generating controversy. Some 25 years ago, his argument for the benefits of an anti-inflammatory diet—including more radiant skin and better health—in his book *The Wrinkle Cure* “was not really accepted at all,” he tells *Woman’s World*. Now, of course, the link between inflammation and whole-body health is more widely accepted.

Today, despite growing and then selling a popular skincare company (Perricone MD) and authoring several *New York Times* bestsellers, Dr. Perricone, a dermatologist and certified nutrition specialist, is still interested in learning more about how he can help people turn back the clock on aging and live a healthier life. Case in point: He recently attended a Yale University graduation ceremony—his own, to accept a Master’s in Public Health, which he hopes will help him in his goal to deliver more nutritious meals to public schools.

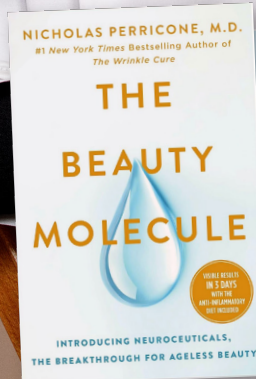
He also recently published *The Beauty Molecule*, which delves into his continued research into inflammation and acetylcholine, a brain chemical he says can protect whole-body health, boost mental wellbeing and re-energize the skin.

Acetylcholine is produced by nerve endings in the central and peripheral nervous systems, which run throughout the brain, spine and entire body, and it has many different functions. “Acetylcholine may be able to repair the mitochondria [which generate energy for every cell in the body], help our immune system, turn off inflammation in our body and more,” Dr. Perricone asserts.

But levels dip with age, so boosting acetylcholine is key for women over 50. Here, Dr. Perricone gives six strategies for increasing acetylcholine and reducing inflammation, so you can tap into greater energy and vitality!



“**Inflammation is at the basis of all Western disease, including the disease of aging”**



**For more on how acetylcholine—a brain chemical Dr. Perricone has dubbed ‘the beauty molecule’—can switch off inflammation to reveal healthier, more radiant skin, check out *The Beauty Molecule*.**

## 1 Focus on these protein sources

Getting enough protein is especially important as you get older, according to Dr. Perricone. That’s because protein plays a key role in skin elasticity, wound healing and the maintenance of muscle mass. It’s made up of amino acids, which are crucial for cell and tissue repair; it’s also necessary for the creation of skin-firming collagen. “The days you don’t get enough protein are the days you age,” Dr. Perricone says.

While it’s typically recommended that adults get 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day, recent research has found that to maintain muscle mass, adults over age 64 should get 1.0 grams to 1.2 grams per kilogram (or 0.45 grams to 0.54 grams per pound) of body weight per day. For a 180-pound woman, that’s about 82 to 97 grams a day.

Protein sources included in the anti-inflammatory diet (which we touch on in more detail on pg 5) include fish, shellfish, poultry and tofu. But chicken and turkey have the added benefit of being high in choline—a precursor to acetylcholine that allows your body to produce more of the beauty molecule naturally. You can also find choline in kidney beans, quinoa and cruciferous vegetables. The nutrient is also available in supplement form, but Dr. Perricone recommends trying to get enough through your diet first.

David Christopher Lee, MacMillan; Getty (2)



## 2 Nurture your vagus nerve

The vagus nerve, which branches from the brain to the gut, is the main nerve of the parasympathetic nervous system, which controls the body’s fight or flight response. When it’s stimulated, it releases acetylcholine, which in turn acts on the immune system to reduce inflammation, calm heart rate

and relax the muscles, helping reduce feelings of stress.

The best part is, you can stimulate your vagus nerve at home, for free, Dr. Perricone says. He’s an advocate for meditation, but deep breathing, humming, chanting and endurance or interval training have all been shown to stimulate the vagus nerve.



## 3 Soak up some sun

Acetylcholine influences the function of a brain region that acts as your body’s internal clock, controlling sleep-wake cycles and many other body functions, including metabolism, digestion and mood. Dr. Perricone says exposing yourself to sunlight at certain key times of day may help “activate” your master clock, promoting the release of acetylcholine and regulating the production of melatonin, a hormone that makes you sleepy and has powerful anti-inflammatory effects.

He suggests getting a few minutes of sun exposure immediately upon waking and at sunset. It’s a proven sleep booster: A 2025 study in the *Journal*

*of Health Psychology* found that people who got morning sun exposure slept better that night. Spending some time outside at sunset can also help: Research published in the journal *Sleep Medicine Reviews* suggests doing so helps keep the body clock in sync and improves sleep. But too much light at night can suppress melatonin production, so it’s best to try to limit your bright light exposure after sunset if possible.

Worried about the effects of the sun on your skin? During the early morning and dusk, the ultraviolet rays that damage the skin and increase the risk of cancer aren’t as strong, Dr. Perricone says. But be careful not to overdo it, and if you have a family history of or other risk factors for skin cancer, talk to your doctor about how to best protect yourself.

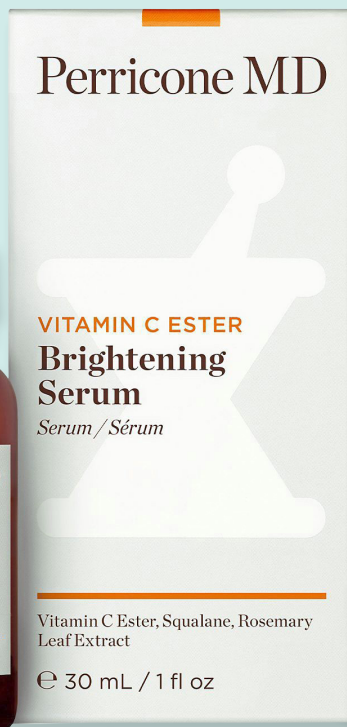




## 4 Stretch every day

Being active can reduce bodywide inflammation and increase the body's production of acetylcholine, Dr. Perricone says. For women over age 50, he recommends doing about 20 minutes of stretching every morning and 20 minutes of weight training twice a week (you can find free workout videos on YouTube). Both types of activity help maintain bone health and muscle mass and will improve the muscles' ability to take in glucose, preventing inflammation-generating blood sugar spikes, Dr. Perricone says.

One important caveat: Don't overdo it! "When you over-exercise, you actually increase some of the stress hormones in your body and it accelerates the aging process and *increases* inflammation," Dr. Perricone says.



## 5 Boost key nutrients

When it comes to skin health, Dr. Perricone says topical products can be a great way of delivering anti-aging nutrients. He names three ingredients with potent anti-inflammatory effects: fat-soluble vitamin C esters (which he says are more effective at penetrating the skin than other forms), alpha-lipoic acid (such as glycolic acid) and DMAE (dimethylaminoethanol), which promotes the production of acetylcholine.

"Products [with these ingredients] can work very well in postmenopausal skin," he notes. That's because the decline in estrogen that occurs during menopause can lead to skin thinning and they can increase the risk of skin inflammation. The brand Dr. Perricone developed sells several products containing

different combinations and concentrations of these ingredients, such as the Perricone MD Vitamin C Ester Brightening Serum and the Perricone MD Multi-Action Overnight Intensive Firming Mask, which contains DMAE and ALA. Or you can find all three in Reviva Labs Alpha-Lipoic Acid + Vit C Ester + DMAE Cream.

Dr. Perricone also recommends taking a few key oral supplements. For women over age 50, he suggests a vitamin B complex, which can help with metabolism and cellular function, and vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant that aids in collagen production. (As always it's important to check with your doctor before starting any new supplements to make sure they are safe for you.)

## 6 Elevate your water

Dr. Perricone calls hydrogen water—a turbocharged water made by dissolving hydrogen gas or molecular hydrogen tablets in regular water—"the magic bullet." The reason? It suppresses cytokines (proteins that cause inflammation) and increases levels of NAD (a compound that's important for energy metabolism and cell repair). In a Korean study, people drinking hydrogen water experienced a 2,900% increase in health-improving antioxidants in the body. And in another study, the sip reduced oxidative stress (the cellular damage that antioxidants work to erase) by 42% over eight weeks.

While a 2024 review found that more research is needed to confirm the benefits of hydrogen water, according to Dr. Perricone, the drink can improve skin radiance in just three days. It's also been shown to reduce fatigue. Dr. Perricone suggests drinking hydrogen water three times a day. He advises choosing a water with at least one part per million of hydrogen and making sure to drink it within 10 minutes of opening it, since the hydrogen dissipates quickly.

To get the perks, you can buy pre-made cans of hydrogen water or you can get elemental magnesium tablets that infuse water with hydrogen.

Getty (3); Perricone MD; Reviva Labs



Hydrogen water is a "magic bullet" when it comes to youthful, glowing skin

## The Anti-Inflammatory Diet

Dr. Perricone deeply believes in the powers of the anti-inflammatory diet, which he developed 25 years ago. Why it works: Chronic inflammation triggers molecules known as free radicals, Dr. Perricone says. High levels of free radicals can create oxidative stress, which damage cells and the mitochondria—cellular engines

that generate energy. In skin cells, this may create loss of elasticity, lines and other signs of aging. Dr. Perricone's plan is meant to reduce this damaging inflammation, restoring cell vitality. "The results are very visible," Dr. Perricone says, noting that you should be able to see a noticeable difference in just three days.

### To try this healthy eating plan:

**Focus on getting enough high-quality protein.** He's especially fond of salmon, which contains omega-3 fatty acids (which reduce inflammation) and antioxidants, but chicken, turkey, tofu and beef are also good sources.

**Eat low glycemic index carbs,** which won't spike your blood sugar and therefore won't cause inflammation. These include leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables, and colorful berries.

**Don't shy away from healthy fats,** especially olive oil, which boasts deep flavor and has anti-inflammatory effects.

**Avoid inflammatory foods and drinks,** including candy, sugary drinks, processed snacks and baked goods and alcohol.

