

CONSCIOUS

Health **versus** Self

Are Southern Californians obsessed with their looks, or are good looks just a by-product of a healthy lifestyle?

Your boxes are packed, your moving checklist is almost complete. Besides worrying about relocating to a new neighborhood, you're found yourself wondering if your leather-fabulous physician is going to make the grade in an area known as the California Evils.

With Orange County boasting 42 miles of surf and sand and sitting right near star to Hollywood, you have every right to be feeling a little self-conscious. Surely everyone here has a body that looks unreal. Your goals, inevitably refer to Orange Coast physicians as some of the most gorgeous, if plump, people in the county.

But just how image-obsessed are we really? Before you start developing a complex or adding coast diet, personal coach or fitness kick to your moving list, there are a few things you should know about the eating and exercising habits of your new neighbors.

Tofu in Every Pot and a Treadmill in Every Garage!

Health and fitness are on the mind of every American these days. It's not your own jogging conscience to get out and exercise, there's a concerned spouse or doctor urging you to change those unhealthy habits.

The people of Orange County are no different; we just have more incentive to stick with a healthy plan. Non-rainy temperate weather means we don't get an opportunity each winter to conceal our bulges with heavy sweaters. The idyllic climate — and its luscious beaches — demands anything will power. When we give in to our primal urge for chocolate, it shows.

We love food just as much as our midwestern neighbors, but we also love to experiment with healthy alternatives. The state has brought you vegetarian and juice bars, now both seemingly trendy, plus a surprising array of raw, organic, unprocessed foods.



If you are a vegetarian or live on a restricted, doctor-prescribed diet, you'll be in heaven here. We have more healthy options than you can shake a corned steak at. From organic beach's elegant Zio Cafe to the popular hipster-inspired Kaulogists in Fullerton, find a healthier meal that's just right for you by clicking www.locounty.com/vegetarian — these are lots of restaurants to choose from.

And, of course, there's seafood. OC's coastal restaurants offer so many seafood fresh-food options it can be difficult to find something truly unhealthy on the menu. With restaurants touting its floor-to-ceiling fresh catches daily, their chefs wouldn't be caught dead taste-dipping, deep-frying or acid-drenching their fish.

Although Orange County food connoisseurs have cultivated a taste for fresh, healthy ingredients, convenient eating for a still of stock won't waste your water right. Businesses making New York's best are open, and some with gardens to match. Farming, in Newport Beach, serves a 22-ounce Farmhouse steak that should awe the appetite of the most voracious meat eater.

But a table more than just healthy eating to keep us sometimes. We like to work out and we know how to keep it interesting. We go through fitness trends our here like Janettes go through laughter. When exercising gets boring we just look north to the city of the stars for the latest fitness craze. Then we adopt it to our regular gym standards and make it our own. You'll find almost every variety of yoga imaginable in OC and Pilates studios galore. We have dozens of workout facilities here, from the elite Sports Club, Irvine, where OC's rich and famous sweat it out, to the local YMCA.



But the gym isn't the only place we like to go. This climate is conducive to outdoor activity and the sunny beaches are an exhilarating workout. There's surfing and volleyball games on Huntington Beach, jogging or rollerblading along the boardwalk, great hiking and mountain biking trails in the Cleveland National Forest and plenty of bikeways just down coast.

This isn't a place where people are punishing their bodies just so they can lay out on the beach. It's also a place to get out and be active.

The Price Tag of Perfection

Of course, money makes in all of us to a certain extent, and Southern California is no exception. Without a doubt, which counts among its big business in California. The state leads the country in the number of beach augmentation procedures done every year.

Orange County's own Huntington Beach was the first to move from its historic attraction in 1900 when a local high school grad told Newsweek that a few of her classmates were receiving breast implants as graduation gifts.

But television shows the MTV's "Real Life: Dr. George Plastic Surgery," which followed a group of young boys and girls through their procedures, proves it's not just a California

thing. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the number of breast augmentations grew 300 percent nationwide between 1992 and 1998.

The bottom line, if it's not health, it's in fact Orange County is home to some of the best beauty shops, fitness centers and health spas in the world. Does this mean you have to not eat and get yourself a tummy tuck and a personal trainer? Should you schedule an appointment with a plastic surgeon?

Not at all. Healthy eating and exercising will come naturally as you sample the local food and enjoy the moving climate. Before you know it you'll be eating salmon instead of chips, savoring the white instead of the TV. You'll avoid health and safety. Those extra pounds will melt away and those stress lines will disappear. But more importantly, you'll feel good. And what's more beautiful than that?