



CHRIS

EVERT:

*Fabulously Fit at 50+*

By Michelle F. Solomon

Talking to Chris Evert, you'd never know that this 54-year-old mother of three is a tennis legend who's the winner of 18 Grand Slam singles titles (including seven French Opens) and who also has the best career win-loss singles record of all time. She seems more like a next-door neighbor: down-to-earth, friendly and straightforward. Evert's also remarkably fit and youthful. And her advice to stay that way is just as straightforward: "Find ways to stay motivated, don't make excuses and make time for yourself," she says.

More than most, Evert knows what a challenge it can be to make time for yourself. Not only is she the mother of three boys, but her husband—golf great Greg Norman—has an active travel schedule and Evert often joins him on trips. In fact, just before we spoke to her, she was getting ready to jet off to Norman's native Australia where the golfer was to compete in the Johnnie Walker Classic in Perth. Then it was off to Brisbane, where the two attended a fundraising dinner for the Greg Norman Golf Foundation.

## A SIMPLE SECRET

However, despite this challenging schedule, Evert has managed to maintain her youthful good looks, fitness and energy level.

So what's her secret? Could it be a special diet? Nope. While she does make sure that her diet is healthy, Evert is not into dieting. "I do allow myself to eat, but I have checks and balances," she says. So she does treat herself every now and again but "in moderation." What about skin care? Again, Evert doesn't do anything special—there are no exotic creams or routines. In fact, the main component of her skin care routine is sunscreen. She never goes anywhere without it, a good idea since one of the main causes of wrinkles is sun exposure.

So is there some other way to explain her age-defying appearance? Actually, yes, and it's a pretty simple solution: Evert makes sure she gets plenty of exercise. Her background as a world-class athlete is a factor in this, but she also cites an attitude change that comes over time. "When you're in your 20s and 30s, you use exercise as more of a means to look good. I think that in your 50s, it's not about examining yourself in the mirror anymore, but being active to feel better overall, mentally and physically, and to have more energy," says the Fort Lauderdale native, who these days makes her home in Boca Raton.

Although health may be Evert's prime motivator to exercise, research suggests that her simple secret is an excellent way to stave off aging. A study done last year at King's College in London using 2,400 sets of twins showed that physically active people have cells that look younger on a molecular level than those who were sedentary. "The data suggest that the act of exercising may actually protect the

body against the aging process," said Tim D. Spector, the study's lead researcher and professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College in London. Other studies have suggested that exercising boosts the production of antioxidants to battle free radicals and also prevents age-related problems like osteoporosis and heart disease.

## *So what's Evert's secret? Pretty simple: regular exercise.*

### FAMILY FITNESS

When it comes to the type of exercise, clearly the former tennis star has a preference. However, she also mixes it up: "I try to do Bikram yoga. I do Pilates. I do strength training," says Evert. And this is a good idea, according to experts. Exercise variety not only keeps you interested but also challenges different sets of muscle groups in different ways.

What also keeps Evert's interest level up is that she and her kids make sure that fitness is a family affair. For instance, Evert's 12-year-old, Colton, loves to surf. The other boys, Alex, 17, and Nicholas, 14, are on their school's tennis teams. "When they come home, guess who they want to play against? I say to them, 'I'm 54, not 24,' yet they still want me to play tennis with them after school," she says. And she makes the time to do it.

### PARTNERING UP

The "buddy system" is also another technique that Evert employs to help her stay on track with her fitness efforts. Norman enjoys a friendly game of tennis now and again with his favorite partner. "He'll come home and he'll look at me with those big blue eyes and I know he wants me to say, 'Do you want to hit some?' And, of course, it's me that suggests it. Then he replies, 'I'd love to.'" Evert is also ready to take Norman up on his offer for golf lessons. "I don't know how to play yet, but I will start to learn when Greg gets a lighter schedule."

While you may not have a Greg Norman to go up against in golf or a Chris Evert to take on in a tennis match, this sports legend believes that the secret to good health is not only how much you play the game, but how you play it. "For me, I have to have a good attitude. I have to be strong and work out. For me, being healthy is not a choice, it's a part of me, and it's a necessity. For me, there's no other way."

Chris holds former NICU patient Pierce Weber while flanked by his proud parents, Alexandra and David.



## A Natural Fit

For Chris Evert, having her name added to the Women's and Children's Center of Broward Health in 1996 was more than just an honor, it was a milestone. "I grew up with Broward General, and it felt like a natural fit to add my name to the place where so many important events in my life have taken place," explains the tennis legend.

Now recognized as one of the top pediatric hospitals in the nation as a provider for family-centered care for newborns, neonates, children and youth, the Chris Evert Children's Hospital at Broward General is a world-class medical facility and consistently recognized by the National Association of Children's Hospitals. "As someone who was born here, whose babies were born here and who still depends on this hospital to care for my family, I have a deep sense of commitment. When you have been honored by having your name on a building, you understand it comes with a responsibility for its future," says Evert.

Last November, Evert and her husband, Greg Norman, attended a special reception hosted by the Broward Health Foundation that was celebrating the 25th

anniversary of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The foundation is in the midst of a \$50 million fundraising campaign to renovate and expand the pediatric hospital to create a more patient-friendly, integrated and high-technology facility. "It was Greg's first visit to the hospital. It was fantastic to show him around and introduce him to the devoted professionals who care for these children. The NICU reunion gave us a chance to meet some of the many children who are alive today because of the dedication, expertise and compassion of the doctors, nurses and employees. I am thrilled to be able to help the Chris Evert Children's Hospital move into a new era, and I'm excited to be part of the planning and the fundraising campaign for the new hospital."

But beyond helping raise funds for a good cause in the local community, the hospital is important to her as a mom. "With three boys, you can imagine that we visit often. Basically, I feel comfortable there. This is our hospital, this is your hospital. We all need to support and invest in the quality healthcare that the Chris Evert Children's Hospital provides every single day," she says.