



SAVING GRACES

DR. JENNIFER ASHTON
DOES MORE THAN
REPORT MEDICAL
NEWS ON NATIONAL
TELEVISION – SHE JUMPS
INTO THE STORY AND
BECOMES PART OF THE
SOLUTION.

by Andrea Doyle

Did You Know?

Jennifer Ashton's practice, Hygeia Gynecology, is GreenOffice Certified, which means 99% of everything patients come into contact with is eco-friendly and non-toxic. It is also paperless — from the medical records to the waiting-room reading materials.

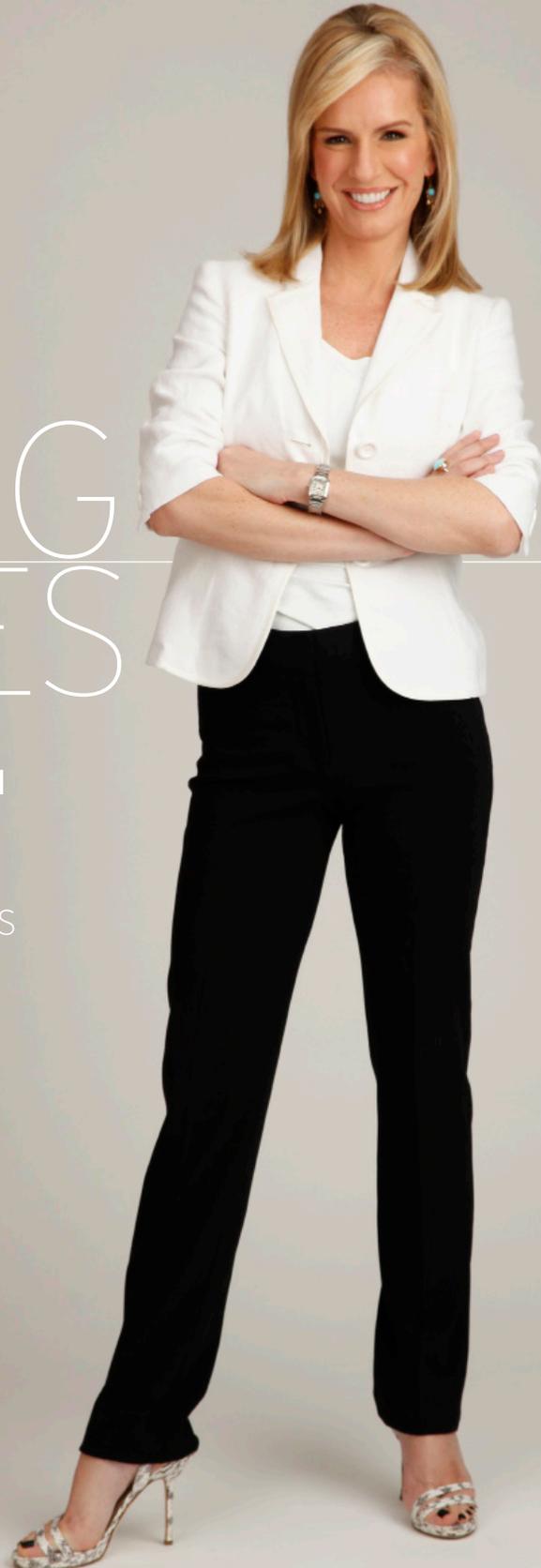


PHOTO BY MICHAEL BENABIB

“IF THERE WERE MORE PROFESSIONALS, ARTISTS, ATHLETES, AND ACTRESSES THAT TEENAGE GIRLS COULD LOOK UP TO, YOUNG WOMEN MAY HAVE AN EASIER TIME WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR SELF-ESTEEM.”

IN THE MIDST OF DEATH, DESTRUCTION, and suffering following last January’s devastating earthquake in Haiti, Englewood OB/GYN and CBS medical correspondent Jennifer Ashton did what she does best — helped save lives while sharing her experience with viewers.

Asked by the network to go to Haiti to report on the crisis, 41-year-old Ashton insisted that she’d only go if she were part of a medical unit. “I made it clear I was going primarily as a doctor, not as a medical journalist,” she says.

Arriving in Port-au-Prince 48 hours after the catastrophe, Ashton says, “I worked in a tent hospital run by the University of Miami that was overrun with patients, and I didn’t sleep for 28 hours after I landed. It was a very difficult, life-changing eight days.”

We sit in her soothing office, the first eco-friendly medical facility in the state. From the paint on the walls to the wool carpet on the floor, it’s as aesthetically pleasing as it is environmentally conscious. Her office — which has a Zen, spa-like quality — is almost entirely paperless.

Ashton slides her Mac into view, sharing with me one of her news reports from Haiti. In the video, she’s dressed in scrubs and yellow Crocs, her hair pulled back with a headband and ponytail — a much different look from the fashionably dressed woman sitting with me. In this segment, she is treating a six-month-old girl, who was burned over 60 percent of her body and subsequently airlifted to Miami. “She

was one of the lucky ones. I saw many young patients die at our hospital. There are so many I’ll never forget,” she admits, turning the monitor from view. “It’s still so hard to watch.”

Ashton’s own children, 12-year-old Alex and 11-year-old Chloë, relied on their father, thoracic surgeon Robert Ashton, while their mother was away. Now back home, she continues to support the island nation that has so changed her by being part of “Sending our Love to Haiti,” a non-profit organization led by an interfaith movement of the Presbyterian Church of Tenafly and Temple Sinai of Bergen County.

She brings this passion about her profession to her practice as well. Frequently referred to as “not your mother’s gynecologist,” Ashton relates to teenage girls, who comprise 50 percent of her practice. “I decided to specialize in adolescent gynecology because I realized teens were not getting the attention they need. They were treated like babies and were talked down to or they were treated like adults,” she explains. “I feel this is a special decade of their lives that deserves a specialized approach.” She took her empowering message nationwide last year with the publication of *The Body Scoop for Girls*, which discusses an overview of a girl’s changing body and addresses topics such as sex, diet, and self-esteem. Believing that the dearth of female role models is one of the biggest challenges teenage girls face today, she observes, “If there were more professionals, artists, athletes, and

actresses that teenage girls could look up to, young women may have an easier time with the development of their self-esteem.”

But talk about role models — Ashton certainly fits the bill as an inspiration to young girls. To hear her routine is humbling: She gets picked up to do the *CBS Early Show* in Manhattan at 5 a.m. and returns to New Jersey to see patients by 9 a.m. With such a hectic schedule, how does this working mother with two careers find balance — and still manage to be so charity-minded? There are two non-negotiables: Exercise and at least eight hours of sleep a night. Ashton, who is training to complete her first triathalon this June in Franklin Lakes, works out at least six times a week, often at The Bar Method in Englewood. “If something isn’t done by 9 p.m., when I go to bed,” she says with a laugh, “it doesn’t get done.” *

Jennifer Ashton’s 5 Health Rules

1. Make 7 to 9 hours of sleep a priority.
2. Eat from the farm, not the factory.
3. Lift weights for exercise.
4. Don’t use anything on your skin that’s not pure enough to eat.
5. Don’t find a doctor you like, find a doctor you love — he or she is your partner in good health.