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Fine-tuning your figure has never been this effective—or this painless.

By Samantha Marshall

The extra fluff of fat below her navel always bothered Emily Blitzer. Overall, the forty-five-year-old mother of two was in great shape. She worked out with a trainer at least twice a week and was always careful about what she ate. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't budge the bulge in her lower abdomen. Liposuction was out of the question—she didn't want to go that far. But when she heard about CoolSculpting by Zeltiq, a new procedure that uses Cryolipolysis, or cold therapy, to cool and destroy fat cells painlessly without incisions or need for anesthesia, she figured she'd give it a try.

"My only hesitation was whether it was going to work," says Blitzer, a physician who describes herself as skeptical about any slim-down quick fix. "It sounded too good to be true."

Her Manhattan-based dermatologist, Melanie Grossman, said she could expect to see some results after three weeks but warned that the full effect of the procedure wouldn't be visible until three to four months later. After a month Blitzer saw no change and was convinced she'd wasted \$750 on an overhyped gimmick. But then, after seven weeks, her stomach became flat for the first time since her pregnancies and her pants felt much looser. "I definitely see a difference," says Blitzer, who estimates she's lost about an inch. She plans to go back for a second treatment on her abdomen, which is usually necessary for the best results.

The age of the bloodless body contour is here. Today it is actually possible to freeze, melt, heat by radio frequency, or ultrasonically blast fat cells without damaging surrounding tissue. That means no surgery, no incisions, and no downtime. The devices in question do not remove massive quantities of fat but instead act as body refiners, shaping and contouring abdomens, love handles, derrieres, and thighs. For those who do require more fat removal, there is a less invasive liposuction technique known as laser lipolysis that uses laser heat to liquefy fat before removing it, which means a gentler procedure with less bruising and recovery time.

Many of these devices are still in the early stages of development, and the inch-loss claims in their corporate literature tend to be overstated. But doctors are cautiously optimistic about the fat-freezing abilities of Zeltiq, the penetrating ultrasound powers of UltraShape and LipoSonix, and the tightening effects of radio frequency-based Thermage. The general consensus on others, such as the low-energy cold laser technology in Lapex BCS LipoLaser or the newly FDA-approved Zerona, is that results, even over several treatments, are barely noticeable. With either, patients will be disappointed if they expect to

drop several dress sizes or lose pounds of flab.

"The less invasive, the less fat you take out, but that's still a great option for many of my clients who don't want, or can't have, surgery," says Wendy Lewis, a leading cosmetic procedures consultant. She adds that many of the women who seek her expertise are so conscious of even the slightest bulge on their otherwise skinny frames that the quick fix offered by Zeltiq is an ideal alternative to liposuction or surgery. Knowing they have this option "means they can have that wedge of brie at the cocktail party without having to starve themselves for the next month," she adds.

Of the noninvasive body contouring devices currently available on the U.S. market, doctors are most impressed with Zeltiq. "Very few patients actually lose weight after this procedure, but they look and feel much better in their clothes," says Grossman, who notes that there is usually a 22 percent reduction in fat in each area treated—just enough, in other words, to see an improvement.

The Zeltiq technique is perhaps the more widely practiced. The science behind it generated a great deal of excitement when researchers at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital discovered that fat cells are more susceptible to cold than are other tissues. After treatment, the fat gradually shrinks and



disappears through the body's normal metabolic process.

But Zeltiq may face some competition in a year or two, when noninvasive focused ultrasound is approved for cosmetic applications. Unlike the kind of pulsed ultrasound energy that's used to reveal fetuses in utero, for example, focused ultrasound concentrates the energy on a single point. Depending on the setting, it can be powerful enough to break up gallstones. Two devices—UltraShape and LipoSonix—harness that energy at a lower intensity to break up and destroy fat cells.

UltraShape is already widely used in Europe, Mexico, and Canada, and the results of double-blind studies for it have now been submitted to the FDA. Doctors here are hopeful. Jeffrey Kenkel, a professor and vice chairman of the Department of Plastic Surgery at the University of Texas in Dallas, participated in clinical trials for UltraShape and was previously on the company's advisory board; he reports that patients lost two to three inches of waist circumference after one to three treatments, and he believes that UltraShape could give other noninvasive treatments strong competition. It is not yet on the market, but most doctors are optimistic—albeit cautious—about its potential.

The treatment works by focusing pulsed acoustic ultrasonic waves onto fat tissue at a particular depth to mechanically disrupt the cells. The energy is monitored and controlled with tracking software and an acoustic sensor that helps protect surrounding tissue and blood vessels and ensures uniform body contouring. LipoSonix similarly uses ultrasound to emulsify fat, but it relies more on thermal energy and may be more painful and its results less impressive.

Clinical studies for both UltraShape and LipoSonix have shown that processing the disrupted fat cells through the body's usual

pathways does not significantly raise triglyceride levels in the body. But many doctors in the U.S. remain skeptical and would like to see more research on both machines. Ultrasound is a powerful form of energy that requires precision to avoid excess pain or injury. If the machine's energy isn't administered properly, it can reflect off bone, for example, and could cause severe discomfort and burn the outer layer of the skin. As with any procedure, it's wise to choose a plastic surgeon or dermatologist who has successfully treated a large number of patients.

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The ideal patient for any of these treatments will have no hernia or tissue scarring, and good practitioners will know whether a patient is too skinny to receive treatment. It's also important to manage expectations. "All of these things do work a little bit, but none of them works a lot," says Gerald Imber, a Park Avenue plastic surgeon who specializes in body contouring through more traditional liposuction and tummy tucks. But for the person who is looking not for a nip and tuck but rather a sculpting and a smoothing, these noninvasive procedures may be worth a shot. •

When You Need More Than an Inch

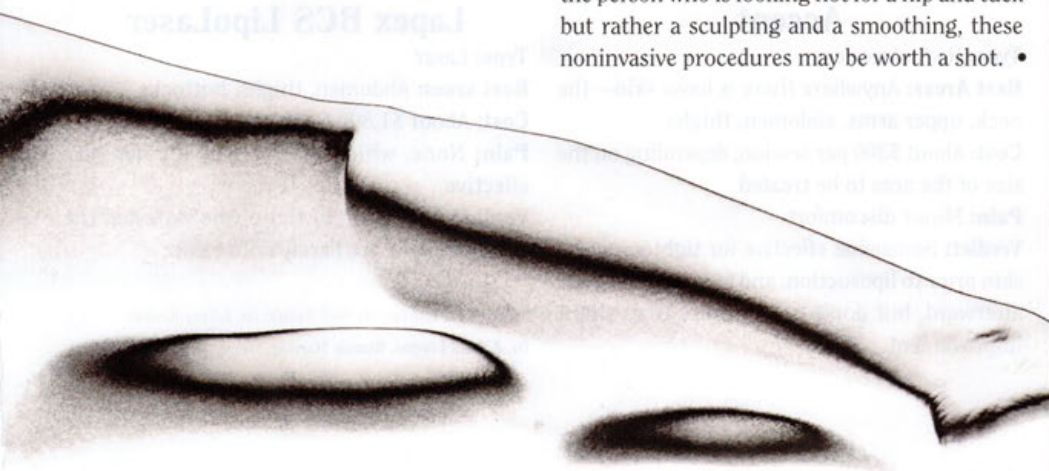
A Laser Lipolysis Update

If your skinny jeans are not just tight but sizes away from fitting, there's laser lipolysis, a minimally invasive procedure that can safely remove liters of fat. Over the past two years, Manhattan-based plastic surgeon Z. Paul Lorenc has treated hundreds of patients using SmoothLipo. (Other common laser lipolysis systems include SmartLipo, the first to win FDA approval, and SlimLipo.) Like traditional liposuction, this technology can debulk most problem areas, but because the fat layer is pre-treated and liquefied using heat from a laser, the mechanics of extracting it are less drastic, and the cannula used to extract fat is only one to two millimeters in diameter, which means less bruising and swelling.

Proponents say this method results in more uniform fat removal for a smoother contour. The heat of the laser also helps stimulate collagen production over time, which tightens skin and lessens the sagging and dimpling associated with traditional liposuction. How much skin tightening occurs is still under debate, although a recent study published in the *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* found an average of 17 percent skin shrinkage on patients three months after the procedure.

Manhattan real estate broker Maria Lopez opted for laser lipolysis when she learned it could be done under local anesthesia. She didn't want any downtime, and a past ruptured brain aneurysm made her nervous about going under. The mother of a grown daughter says she was in decent shape at 110 pounds, but that the older she got the harder it became to get rid of stubborn deposits of fat. Because lidocaine, the numbing agent, can be toxic when overused, Lorenc spaced Lopez's three treatments—on her neck, love handles and bra bulge, and stomach—three weeks apart. They weren't painless, but they were tolerable, and after each, Lopez was back at work the next day. "The only thing that reminded me I had anything done was the compression garment I had to wear for two weeks," says Lopez. She plans to do her arms next, just in time for a family vacation to Ecuador. Now, she reports, "I finally feel confident in a bathing suit."

Photographs: Stewart Cotterill/Debraj Kumar/Getty Images



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ZASHA

by
Jude Frances

STYLE *Beauty*

The Treatments

The best—and the worst—of the noninvasive contouring devices

Zeltiq

Type: Cryolipolysis
Best areas: Back, flanks, lower abdomen
Cost: \$750 per treated area
Pain: None, but there's often some bruising and redness.
Verdict: Delivers what it promises. Patients don't necessarily lose pounds, but they see an average 22 percent reduction of fat in the treated area.

LipoSonic

Type: Focused ultrasound
Best areas: Small pockets of stubborn fat: thighs, buttocks, abdomen, back
Cost: Overseas patients spend \$3,000 to \$9,000.
Pain: Some doctors say it can cause discomfort on a scale comparable to Thermage.
Verdict: It can take off inches, although how many has not been determined. An improvement in the appearance of cellulite may accompany an overall reduction in fat.

UltraShape

Type: Focused ultrasound
Best areas: Wherever there are fatty deposits and an adequate amount of tissue to treat
Cost: Similar to LipoSonic
Pain: Brief heating sensations but reportedly not as uncomfortable as LipoSonic
Verdict: Various clinical studies in the U.S. and overseas have noted positive results, but there needs to be more testing to determine the appropriate energy levels and depth of treatment for each patient.

Accent

Type: Radio frequency
Best Areas: Anywhere there is loose skin—the neck, upper arms, abdomen, thighs
Cost: About \$300 per session, depending on the size of the area to be treated
Pain: Minor discomfort
Verdict: Somewhat effective for tightening the skin prior to liposuction, and for smoothing out afterward, but don't expect more than slight improvement.

Thermage

Type: Radio frequency
Best areas: Anywhere skin needs tightening. New tips allow for targeted tightening on upper arms, abdomen, thighs, and buttocks.
Cost: Up to \$2,500 per treatment
Pain: New cooling and vibrating technology counteracts the heat spikes common with earlier generations of Thermage.

Verdict: Considered the most effective of the noninvasive skin tighteners. It doesn't debulk, but can be a good complement to other body-shaping procedures—tightening loose skin after liposuction, for example.

Zerona

Type: Laser
Best areas: Abdomen, thighs, buttocks
Cost: About \$3,500 for six sessions
Pain: None, except the sting of disappointment
Verdict: "Does it work? Somewhat," says Imber. But improvements are barely noticeable.

VelaShape & SmoothShapes

Type: Laser
Best areas: Stomach, buttocks, thighs—any place with cellulite
Cost: From \$1,000 to \$3,000 for a full series
Pain: None, but the massage and suction may be a little intense for some.
Verdict: Good add-ons for patients who have had liposuction or significant weight loss to help tighten loose skin and smooth out lumps caused by adhesions.

Lapex BCS LipoLaser

Type: Laser
Best areas: Abdomen, thighs, buttocks
Cost: About \$1,800 for 10 sessions
Pain: None, which may be why it's not very effective
Verdict: According to those who've tested the device, results are barely noticeable.

*Additional sources: Dr. Neil Sadick, Dr. Jeffrey Kenkel, Dr. Z. Paul Lorenc, Bonnie Marting, Wendy Lewis

Multiple Choice.

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