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Body Shop

A growing group of **NONINVASIVE** procedures promise to target fat and sculpt muscle—no effort or surgery required.

But the results can come at a cost. That's why dermatologists are sharing the need-to-know info on these treatments.

BY ELISE MINTON TABIN

THE MUSCLE TONERS

KNOWN AS
Emsculpt, Emsculpt Neo, CoolTone, truSculpt flex, EvolveX

TREATMENT AREAS
Thighs, butt, arms, and abdomen

COST
Approximately \$750 per treatment

SESSIONS
Four or more

PAIN FACTOR
Minimal

RESULTS
Lasts 6 to 12 months

▶ **THE VERY IDEA**—not to mention the *sensation*—of your muscles contracting as you remain still feels as kooky as it sounds. But it's exactly what you'll experience during a session with one of these devices. Attachments are secured to treatment areas, and once the switch is flipped, high-intensity focused electromagnetic energy (HIFEM) activates muscle contractions in a way you'd be hard-pressed to replicate at the gym (think upwards of 20,000 crunches or squats in 30 minutes, say manufacturers). The feeling: An odd mix of contractions, tightness, vibration, and heat, followed by a tapping sensation to release the lactic acid that forms. Not painful per se, but as close to an out-of-body experience as one might encounter.

▶ **WHILE EMSCULPT, THE OG**, targets muscle alone, as do truSculpt flex+ and CoolTone, Paul Jarrod Frank, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in New York City, says that newer technology like Emsculpt Neo takes things a step further, blasting fat and tightening skin with radiofrequency. Once you've completed the recommended sessions, you'll have built some muscle mass, lost a tiny bit of fat, and created leaner definition and better posture. "You can even decrease urinary incontinence due to stronger core muscles," says Janet Allenby, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Delray Beach, Florida. You may feel slightly sore afterward, but it's nothing you can't handle.

THE FAT MELTERS

KNOWN AS
truSculpt iD, SculptSure, EON, Kybella

TREATMENT AREAS
Flanks, abdomen, arms, back, and bra line

COST
From \$1,000 per treatment

SESSIONS
One to three

PAIN FACTOR
Minimal

RESULTS
Permanent

▶ **HEATING OR DISSOLVING FAT** so your body can naturally flush it away is the supposed superpower of these devices. Fat-melting treatments tackle specific areas with intense heat, radiofrequency, ultrasound, or lasers, causing those cells to die. While the specifics vary, most of these devices use a large waistband applicator to deliver the energy—for noticeable results, the fat must be heated to around 122°F. The devices have built-in safety features, but yeah, you'll want to see a skilled physician. The vibe? Think short bursts of extreme heat, like a powerful heating pad on the highest setting. It's tolerable, and then the device quickly cools and the process starts all over again.

▶ **THE ONE OUTLIER:** Kybella, a fat-melting injection that doctors use off-label (it's approved to reduce the appearance of a double chin, but many derms treat other areas of the body). A few injections—yes, they sting—can be used to get results on the arms, back, and bra line. But the effects come only after a worse-before-better period that involves swelling and potential bruising. Once that resolves, the inflammation from Kybella causes the tissue to reorganize, which means you'll get about a 20 percent tightening in addition to fat reduction, says the brand.

357,938

noninvasive fat-reduction treatments were performed in 2020, according to the most recent data currently available.

Source: American Society of Plastic Surgeons



PREVIOUS SPREAD AND THIS SPREAD: GETTY IMAGES

The idea of doing thousands of crunches as you lie still on your back or of melting fat without breaking a sweat may seem like Marvel movie stuff.

Yet modern aesthetics companies have created devices they claim make it possible—and they're available at a med spa or derm's office near you.

Of course, the idea of transforming your body with the help of a doctor is nothing new: Plastic surgeons have long offered nips and tucks. Unlike when you go under the knife, though, these treatments supposedly sculpt, tighten, and firm with no downtime (perhaps why nonsurgical options are expected to become a \$150 billion industry by 2030). "It's now easier and more affordable than ever to make tiny tweaks to your physique," says Stacy Chimento, MD, a board-certified aesthetic dermatologist in Bay Harbour Islands, Florida. Socialite status, no longer required.

But many of these treatments are still quite pricey, and research shows that some offer mild to moderate clinical effects at best. (And, almost goes without saying: There are so many reasons, beyond aesthetics, to exercise—don't think of these procedures as a gym replacement.) "We have measurement tools that verify results in millimeters, but ultimately, it's about what a patient sees in the mirror," says dermatologist Ranella Hirsch, MD, a past president of the American Society of Cosmetic Dermatology and Aesthetic Surgery. Dramatic before-and-after photos are usually misleading or downright false, and complications can occur.

For these reasons, Hirsch recommends seeking the guidance of a board-certified dermatologist (skip the spa!) who can have an honest convo about the risks, results, and true cost. Ahead, docs reveal the nitty-gritty details to consider.

THE FAT FREEZER

KNOWN AS
CoolSculpting

TREATMENT AREAS
Abdomen,
waist, inner thighs,
bra line, back,
arms, and butt

COST
Approximately
\$3,200 total

TREATMENTS NEEDED
Two or more

PAIN FACTOR
Moderate to
very uncomfortable

RESULTS
Permanent

► **COOLSCULPTING** put noninvasive fat-blasting devices on the map, but the recent media storm surrounding former supermodel Linda Evangelista's experience of paradoxical adipose hyperplasia (PAH), a rare side effect that causes enlarged tissue, has now made it a household name. And while PAH is uncommon, "a risk of 1 in 10,000 means nothing if you're that one person," says Hirsch, who does not offer CoolSculpting in her practice. Again, seeing a board-certified dermatologist can further reduce the chance of complications, but don't just rely on a consent form. Hirsch says it's important to find a doctor who'll be explicit about the possible side effects (she schedules a separate 45-minute consultation with patients who are interested in treatments before a single switch is flipped).

► **SO HOW DOES IT WORK?** The device delivers cold temperatures via applicators that freeze fat cells so they break down and die, a process known as cryolipolysis. That part's not too bad—a slight vacuum-like sensation followed by intense cold before the area goes numb. After removal of the applicators, the treated area feels "like a frozen stick of butter, so we massage it to break up those fat cells," Chimento explains. (This process can be uncomfortable.) The newest iteration, CoolSculpting Elite, treats two areas simultaneously and features different applicator sizes and shapes for better fit and comfort.

THE SKIN TIGHTENERS

KNOWN AS
Thermage, Exilis Ultra,
Profound,
Morpheus8 Body, Ultherapy

TREATMENT AREAS
Arms, stomach, legs,
and butt

COST
From \$1,000 per treatment

TREATMENTS NEEDED
One to four

PAIN FACTOR
Moderate to severe
(you'll need numbing cream
or a local anesthetic)

RESULTS
Lasts one to two years

► **BODY TRANSFORMATIONS CAN LEAVE BEHIND** extra skin, and derms can help tackle it with heat—radiofrequency, ultrasound, and lasers. All of them feel like a super-hot stone massage as they deliver heat beneath the skin's surface to stimulate elastin and collagen production for a tightening effect. To see firmness, "the skin needs to get hot enough to dissolve or tear apart the hydrogen bonds between collagen bundles so it can all be replaced with fresh new collagen," says Ava Shamban, MD, a celebrity cosmetic dermatologist in Beverly Hills.

► **DOCTORS ARE USING TREATMENTS** typically reserved for the face off-label on the body, including Ultherapy and radiofrequency microneedling treatments. Profound and Morpheus8 Body are the strongest of these, and they safely stamp needles into the skin while simultaneously delivering skin-firming energy. People with darker skin tones should proceed with caution, though, says Chimento. "Although these are colorblind and safe, melanin-rich skin does tend to absorb more energy, which means there's still a risk of burning, which is always a major concern with devices that pack a lot of energy like these," she says.

THE CELLULITE SMOOTHERS

KNOWN AS
Qwo, Emtone,
Resonic Cellulite Treatment

TREATMENT AREAS
Thighs and butt

COST
From \$450
per treatment

TREATMENTS NEEDED
One to four

PAIN FACTOR
Minimal to moderate

RESULTS
Lasts 12 months or longer

► **CELLULITE AFFECTS UP TO** 90 percent of American women, and there haven't been any great solutions—no matter what that jar of firming cream says—for those who do want to address it. (You embrace it or feel pretty neutral on the matter? Right on.) That's because it's caused by three separate things: loose skin, protruding fat, and fibrous bands that pull on the skin. For moderate to severe dimples, the painless injectable Qwo is an option. "It's an enzyme that breaks up the septae bands that pull on the skin, redistributes fat, and stimulates collagen to smooth cellulite," Chimento says. The results can be dramatic, but they come with major bruising. But Qwo isn't your only option. Off-label use of Sculptra and Radiesse stimulates collagen production to fill dimples.

► **AND IF YOU'RE A NEEDLE-PHOBIC,** other anti-cellulite treatments such as Emtone combine radiofrequency with targeted pressure to make cellulite less noticeable. "The heat penetrates deeply and breaks up the fibrous bands that cause dimpling," Frank says. "It also evens out the superficial fat layers that can exacerbate cellulite and helps tighten the skin superficially." Then there's Resonic, which sends high-pressure acoustic shock waves into the skin to change the fibrous septae that pull on fat and reduce cellulite with one session. Allenby describes it as feeling like a little jackhammer without being painful. "The trauma creates a cellular response that thickens skin for a smoother look," she adds.

The percentage of patients seeking cosmetic procedures who meet the diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphic disorder. Skilled docs can identify these individuals during a consult—and get them help.

Source: Body Image

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