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SINSEHS, THE NEW WEIGHT-LOSS GURUS?

Before, women would bust their asses on the treadmill, dutifully eat salads, and slather on cellulite creams, to get rid of their dimpled behinds and thighs. Today, they turn to machines that employ light, sound and action for the job.

Pushed by doctors and beauty centres, these anti-cellulite machines are said to give faster and better results, and offer more spot-on treatment for cellulite than exercise – sweet words especially for those who are thin and active yet struggling with orange-peel behinds.

Do they work? Yes, according to Khristine Joy Nicolas, a 31-year-old investment analyst who shed her pregnancy pounds but not the rippled pockets on her thighs, buttocks, hips and arms. A friend suggested endermologie, a treatment that uses vacuum suction and rollers to recontour and smoothen the body.

"I went once a week and after two months, my skin was smoother," says Khristine. "After six months, my skin was no longer uneven. I also lost two inches off my thighs and my arms look thinner."

Unlike cellulite busters like mesotherapy or carboxytherapy that involve a series of injections of drug cocktails, the machines aren't as intimidating or uncomfortable, and an easier option to pounding the stairmaster. As Khristine rationalises: "Endermologie feels like a massage. For the same cost – about \$150 a session – there're a lot more benefits."

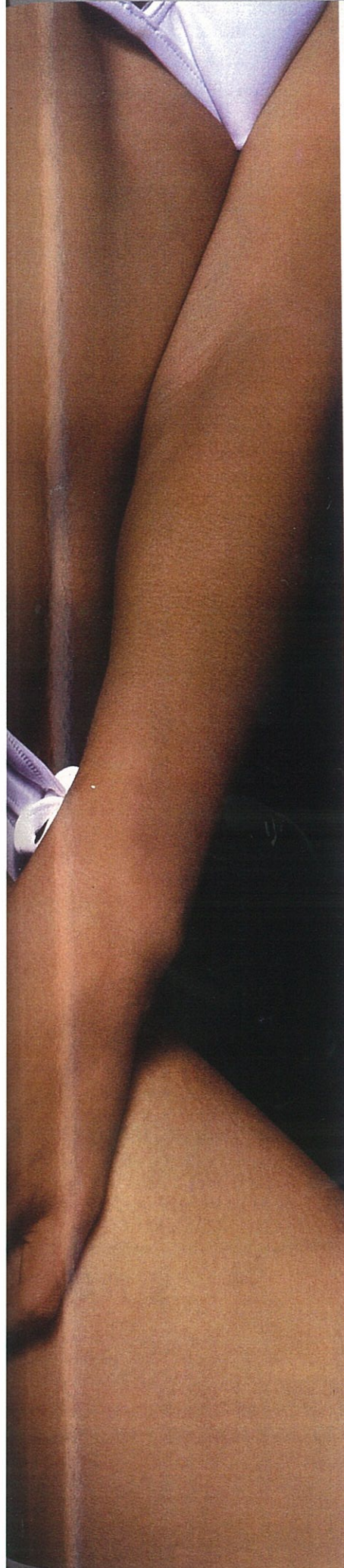
The problem with cellulite is that it's not just a matter of fat. It occurs when fibrous tissue-bands tie down clusters of fat (the more you have, the worse it looks). The lumpiness is compounded by age-related sagging. The effect you'd want is to tighten the skin and spread out the fat cells, says Dr Ivor Lim, consultant plastic surgeon of The Plastic & Hand Surgery (Camden Medical Centre).

Shake it up, baby!

The latest anti-cellulite machines look like gadgets from a techie flick, but operate on the tenets of fat displacement, skin tightening or microcirculation – all are ways to improve and prevent cellulite. Depending on what technology the machine uses, the sensation

Out damned fat!

They roll, pinch, lift and smooth – HE PEIWEN makes sense of the latest machines that claim to refine our dimpled thighs and butts.



can range from a vigorous massage, or when electrical or heat waves are used, a comforting deep heat to an uncomfortable, tingling pain.

These are the basic technologies behind the gizmos:

- **Endermologie**

Through a strong massage motion that feels like someone is kneading your flesh really hard, it physically lifts the skin and underlying fat deposits to spread them out more evenly and improve lymphatic circulation for better drainage of toxins and excess water. The most common example is the LPG Endermologie machine.

- **Radio frequency**

Radio waves that penetrate into the skin's dermal layer speed up skin metabolism and strengthen collagen fibres. The skin becomes firmer and more elastic. They can also shrink fat cells when used on a more intense level. A common machine using radio waves is Thermage, that can be found only at the doctors.

“Endermologie feels like a massage, the cost is about the same, \$150 a session, but it comes with a lot more benefits.”

- **Infra-red**

The rays turn into heat energy that acts on the superficial layers of the skin to shrink and tighten it. The VelaSmooth machine combines this form of energy with endermologie and radio frequency, and you can do this at a clinic.

- **Ultrasound**

High-frequency sound waves melt down fat so it can be passed out of the body. This is used in combination with vacuum suction in a machine called Triactive. Ultrasound machines are found in both clinics and beauty salons.

Doctors have different opinions on the best machine for cellulite. Dr Lim says that endermologie, with or without additional technologies, is the best option because of its physical lifting action. But the results aren't for life. After the initial eight to 10 sessions to get the desired results, once-a-month maintenance sessions are needed. A good diet and healthy lifestyle will extend the time

between visits but chain-smoke, suntan, or binge regularly, and you'll be a very frequent client.

Thermage is another good clinical option for cellulite. According to Dr JJ Chua, consultant plastic and laser surgeon at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre, most people need just one session to see enough improvement to last them a few years.

What treatment you need depends on your skin condition. The looser the skin, the more tightening sessions needed. Surprisingly, the type of cellulite makes little difference in which treatment to use, the doctors say. In fact, Dr Chua advocates the more cost-effective route of exercise and cellulite creams if yours is a mild rippling problem (only visible when pinched). When muscles build up, they push up against the skin to give it a smoother, more toned appearance.

Doctor vs salon

Between the cosmetic physician and beauty salon, who should you go to? Doctors say their powerful machines use more intense levels of light and heat energy than salon machines. Dr Lim adds that doctors can customise the optimal energy level to the patient, and are better at handling any problems that could arise, such as burns. Salons fight back with pampering incentives while you get zapped, such as the complimentary leg masks that Marie France Bodyline offers. Salons also use serums and masks that they claim will enhance the benefits of their machines.

No matter where you go, a cellulite-free body is not cheap. Full-body endermologie with an LPG machine goes for \$75-\$150 for a 35- to 45-minute session. It is available at Aura & Miracles at Delfi Orchard, and the DRx Clinic at Forum.

The VelaSmooth machine at The Plastic & Hand Surgery gives results in as quickly as four treatments. But a course of eight sessions over a month is recommended. That totals up to \$864-\$2,016 for one section of the body.

Thermage (available at IPL-Laser Medical & Aesthetic Clinic and J.J. Chua Rejuvenative Cosmetic & Laser Surgery) vary from \$5,000 to \$8,000 for one body area.

The treatments are pricey, but to those women who can't face the world with their cellulite in all its full glory, what's a little rock and roll? **HW**