

THE SKINNY ON SHORTCUTS

When it comes to slimming down, Miamians want results, and we want them now. But is it possible?

By Maria Tettamanti

Muffin top, hip rolls, saddle bags, love handles, the pooch—no matter what you call them, the ugly fact remains: Fat deposits can drive one to the brink of bad-body-image obsession. But are there quick, nonsurgical fixes that don't involve the insertion of a cannula and tons of downtime?

Miami happens to be on the fat-busting frontier (no shock there) with a spate of noninvasive techniques such as Exilis, Thermage, Zeltiq and VelaShape. All of these treatments cost less than liposuction and come with minimal pain. But do they work? The answer is yes—but the results aren't permanent.

Exilis and Thermage are two techniques used for "skin tightening." The former treatment involves a radio frequency device that emits energy deeper into the skin, using heat to break down fat. High-profile Coral Gables- and Manhattan-based cosmetic dermatologist Dr. Fredric Brandt says, "I've seen patients lose a half-inch off their waistline from Exilis with minimal side effects." The treatment feels like a warming sensation, and most patients receive four 20-minute sessions per area (at \$500 per session).

Thermage uses radio-frequency technology, as well. "We heat the undersurface of the skin, causing it to tighten," says Dr. Michael Kelly of Miami Plastic Surgery. "It works best on the face of patients with minimal



looseness." You'll feel a brief cooling tingle followed by heat during the treatment, which will run you \$1,550 and up. Most patients need just one session.

For fat reduction in the flanks and stomach area, Brandt recommends Zeltiq. "Instead of heat, this is cool sculpting—we're freezing the fat cells," he explains. Patients must sit for an hour while a suction-cup-like device crystallizes fat cells. On average, people see a 20 percent reduction of fat in the treated area after just one visit. The treatment costs about \$700 per area.

VelaShape is a method that improves the overall quality of skin. "There is nothing out there that cures you from cellulite," says Dr. Leonard

Tachmes of Miami Beach Plastic Surgery Center and MedSpa. "All you can do is minimize its appearance and maintain it with serial treatments." The Tachmes team often performs VelaShape (at \$1,200 per area) during a patient's lunch break. Skin is smoothed and stretched, thus diminishing the look of cellulite. Full treatment for an area takes 20 minutes and feels like a deep-tissue massage. Superficial bruising may appear, and at least six treatments are encouraged for best results. A 50 to 75 percent improvement in cellulite appearance is claimed.

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In the end, however, when it comes to nonsurgical fat-blasting results, all the doctors we spoke to are skeptical of permanent results. While cellulite's appearance can be masked with serial treatments, the best prescription for long-term weight and cellulite loss remains the same: Follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly. And take some solace in the fact that even if it can't happen quickly, it will happen. **OD**