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# Shape Shifters

Name a body part, any body part, and there's now a way to tighten it, smooth it, plump it up, or slim it down. **By Joan Kron**

**F**or centuries, the only viable methods of transforming the body involved sweat, Spartan self-denial, or corsets. Granted, the standards were a bit more forgiving than they are today, as any trip to a museum will attest. (Though skip the medieval galleries; those bitches were skinny!) That Fonda-era admonition "No pain, no gain" just underlined the concept that self-improvement involves hardship. Well, guess what? It ain't necessarily so. Science has gradually caught up with the human propensity for sloth and the equally human desire for physical perfection. There are ultrasound and radio-frequency devices to melt fat, injections that go where no injection has gone before, and gizmos to zap cellulite or freeze fat cells. One day, perhaps, gain will leave pain in the dust altogether; in the meantime, we've selected the best available options right now. —**DAVID DeNICOLA**

## Back

Vanquish is a painless radio-frequency procedure that melts back fat and bra rolls (as well as belly fat) without touching the body. During four 30-minute sessions, the fat is heated to 120 degrees (it feels like standing in front of a warm radiator). Results are typically visible within three months. Howard Sobel, a New York City dermatologic surgeon, says, "Vanquish is a great noninvasive option for people who have small pockets of fat."

## Arms

Reducing fat in the arms vexed doctors because of the long scars from surgical skin tightening. Liposuction works well and requires one or two quarter-inch incisions. And the FDA recently approved ThermiRF, a minimally invasive treatment that tightens skin with heat from radio-frequency energy, according to plastic surgeon Jason Pozner.

## Hands

Tanners sometimes inject high-quality leather with fat to make it more supple—and doctors now use a similar technique on the hands. In a two-step operation, a small amount of fat is removed from the thighs or abdomen by liposuction, then cleansed of impurities and injected in the backs of the hands to plump crepey skin and obscure veins. Swelling takes several days to subside.

## Breasts

The latest buzz in cosmetic surgery is about fat injections to increase breast size. The results are natural-looking, and the procedure leaves behind no scars, although calcium deposits in the fat can cause false-positive readings on mammograms. Size increases from injections are modest, though: only one or, at most, two cups. Those who want implants are choosing realistic-feeling gel-silicone models three to one over saline implants.



## Waist

CoolSculpting, which eliminates fat cells by chilling them to death, works well on minor fat around the waist.

It can take weeks for the body to flush out the dead fat cells and reveal results. For a circumferential (all-around) treatment of fat in the waist, liposuction is still the most efficient method, but it requires local or deeper anesthesia and causes more bruising. Reshaping with lipo can be permanent, barring major weight gain.

## Buttocks

A polished gemstone with no facets is called a cabochon, and that's also the name of a new minimally invasive treatment for cellulite in the buttocks. Recently approved by the FDA, Cabochon requires a single one-hour session to sever the fibrous attachments that cause puckered skin. Pain is a two to three on a scale of ten. In studies he has conducted, Michael Kaminer, a Boston dermatologist, says, "buttock dimples respond beautifully," and results have not diminished two years later.

## Calves

This is not an easy zone to alter, but doctors are reporting limited success with a couple of procedures: Thick legs can be made more shapely with liposuction using tiny tubes, and thin legs can be made fuller with soft silicone implants inserted through a small incision behind the knee.

## Knees

Doctors have devised a method to make knees look more shapely. Liposuction with tubes no thicker than a drinking straw works on little pockets of fat, and unlike external fat melters, the treatment can target the right spot.

## Thighs

Saddle bags (which are often hereditary) can be whittled away with liposuction under local anesthesia. For more subtle results, two sessions of TruSculpt, a noninvasive method that uses radio frequency to generate heat, may also reduce fat.

## Midriff

Liposuction is the gold standard for getting rid of fat, but if the roll that hangs over your jeans is minimal, there are several noninvasive options. VaserShape melts the fat with ultrasound, followed by a vigorous massage to help it dissipate. It isn't FDA-approved for this purpose, but many doctors are using it successfully (and legally). VelaShape, a similar device, uses radio frequency to generate heat, plus massage; both require at least two treatments.

## Stomach

Excess weight in this area comes in many shapes and sizes. The most effective way to remove significant abdominal fat and excess skin—from a potbelly to a postbaby pooch—is a tummy tuck, officially known as an abdominoplasty. This is serious surgery with general anesthesia and up to several weeks of recovery, but the results are long-lasting if weight remains stable. Scars can be at the bikini line or lower. CoolSculpting can also be used on small areas of the stomach.

# Freeze Frame

**Our guinea pig tries CoolSculpting, a procedure that zaps belly fat and love handles with one very cold suction cup.**

I work out. I am not overweight. But I have bulges around my midsection that are immune to sit-ups, cardio, and almonds for lunch. I first learned about CoolSculpting from a dermatologist, who explained that a machine freezes fat cells below the skin, causing a portion of the little buggers to die off and exit the body by way of the lymphatic system. This can result in a 20 percent reduction of fat deposits. No incisions, no scars. I made an appointment.

Natasha, my technician, first assessed whether I was a good candidate—basically

if I had enough fat for the machine to get a "good grab." I passed with flying colors. After explaining that most people experience only minor discomfort (not to worry: I had taken a Xanax), she applied a cold, clammy goo to my stomach. Then she revved up the machine and placed an oblong suction cup over my stomach, a portion of which was harshly sucked inside. Deliberate breathing helped lessen the sensation that my abdomen was being drawn through the eye of a needle. And, boy, that thing was cold!

This went on for an hour, while I thought of all those little fat cells dying. (I could almost hear their tiny screams.) When Natasha came back to remove the wand, the offending flab looked like a slab of

chilled butter. The area was red and swollen, and she immediately went to town with a vigorous massage. This was the most uncomfortable part—though more ticklish than painful. I was back to normal activities, including the gym, within a day, but the swelling and a bit of soreness persisted for a week. It took a good six weeks to see a very modest reduction. At nine weeks, though, my stomach looked flatter and my pants fit more loosely.

So I booked another treatment. I've now had five of the \$700 sessions, and each one has brought gradual improvement. The cushion of fat on my stomach is still present, but barely, and I can see muscles down there that haven't been visible since college.

—ANONYMOUS