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THE NEW
**FAT
ERASER**

UltraShape claims it can shrink your belly with no pain. Too good to be true? By Liz Krieger

YOU'VE HEARD IT before: No pain, no gain. Beauty requires a bit of suffering. That's certainly still largely true—at least in terms of bikini waxes, barre workouts, and, for the most part, effective cosmetic procedures. But now a new fat-melting device, UltraShape, is poised to turn that timeworn adage into a thing of the past, promising to whittle your waist without so much as a wince.

While other popular nonsurgical methods for fat removal and body contouring use extreme heat or cold to destroy fat cells, UltraShape uses focused, pulsed ultrasound waves that generate neither heat nor cold but still prove deadly to the fat cells most stubbornly resistant to diet and exercise, a.k.a. the subcutaneous fat layer. The device, which was cleared by the FDA last spring, works by sending ultrasound waves directly into fat, "shaking their membranes to the point where they literally collapse," explains dermatologic surgeon William Coleman, a clinical professor of dermatology at Tulane University, who was a principal investigator on one of the clinical studies. This "cavitation" process doesn't harm any other tissues—e.g., blood vessels or nerves—and remains of the dissolved fat cells are eventually processed by the body via the liver. Because the fat isn't heated or frozen, patients have reported little to no pain and minimal recovery time and bruising—which you can't hide if you're doing this during beach season, says Leslie Baumann, a dermatologist in Miami.

Of course, as effective as it potentially may be, UltraShape isn't for everyone, and it's no miracle worker if you've got more to lose than just a bit of a belly. There's still nothing that can beat liposuction or a tummy tuck for fast, effective fat loss, says Steven Teitelbaum, a plastic surgeon in Santa Monica, who also participated in the UltraShape clinical studies. Plus, if your muscles are separated or your tummy skin is loose from pregnancy, UltraShape can't help.



Treatments resulted in an average of a 1.3- to 2.5-inch reduction around the waist.

How the procedure works: Guided by a sophisticated 3-D computer mapping program, your doctor positions the device head to reach areas of extra fat or to create the contours you desire, says Teitelbaum. In the clinical studies, a series of three 45- to 60-minute treatments (each done about two weeks apart) resulted in an average of a 1.3- to 2.5-inch reduction around the waist. Other fat-reducing treatments like Liposonix or CoolSculpting not only can cause bruising, numbness, or discomfort, adds Teitelbaum, but also can take six weeks or more to produce a visible effect. By contrast, most UltraShape patients notice the first slimming results within two weeks, says dermatologist Bruce Katz, director of New York's Juva Skin & Laser Center. Cost: \$2,700-\$4,500 for three treatments.

While it's been FDA-cleared for the stomach, doctors can use it "off label" on thighs, arms, or back, notes Baumann.

When Robyn Casiano, 42, of Louisiana, who participated in one of the studies, saw that her trim waist and flat belly had become burdened by the dreaded muffin top, she blocked out three lunch hours for UltraShape treatments. Within three weeks her pants were looser and her pudge was noticeably dwindling. After six weeks she had lost more than two inches from her waist. She calls the procedure "pain-free."

Some experts aren't quite ready to position UltraShape as a true game changer. "I think any new innovation is exciting and can add to our range of options for patients," says Melanie Grossman, a New York dermatologist. "That said, I think it remains to be seen if the majority of patients do have a zero-pain experience. I have plenty of patients who doze off while I do CoolSculpting, and that gets similar results."

In fact, the no pain, no gain mind-set can be hard to shake. Says Casiano: "I'll admit, as I lay there, I was thinking, There's no way this can be doing anything! It seemed too easy." But with her waistline now slimmer, she adds, it proved to be time well spent. ■