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Rude Health: Stimulate that cellulite

Sunday, June 08, 2003

By Jenneifer O'Connell

The babygro alarmed me. There it was, soft and white, lying out on a chair in the serene white therapy room.

I looked around, half-expecting to see a cot. There wasn't one, but lurking ominously in the corner of the room was a large metal contraption which looked like something borrowed from the set of ER.

I wriggled into the babygro (yes, that's its technical title) and eased myself onto the bed, face down, while my therapist, Jackie, went to work on the backs of my thighs.

Endermologie is billed as a revolutionary new treatment which uses gentle suction to massage your skin, improve the skin tone and increase circulation. This in turn is supposed to stimulate subcutaneous layers of fat and muscle, reducing ^ or hopefully eliminating ^ cellulite.

It is also the only anticellulite treatment that's been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and that's good enough for me.

That's the science bit. The practice is a not-unpleasant sensation, occasionally bordering on the slightly painful. Imagine getting a massage by Jean-Claude Van Damme, and you're some of the way there. The pain gets slightly worse where the skin is looser and there's more cellulite.

Cellulite is caused by adipose ^ or fatty ^ deposits which push against the connective tissue beneath the skin, creating that delightful `dough poured into a string bag' effect.

Dermatologists say that all women, except the severely malnourished, have some cellulite ^ but if it's only visible when you pinch your skin between your hands, it's considered very mild.

Even gorgeous Jerry Hall was pictured on the beach recently with orange-peel thighs and Jennifer Lopez suffers from it too, so next time you squeeze reluctantly into a bikini, take heart from the knowledge that you're in good company. Endermologie has a number of celebrity devotees including, it's rumoured, several well-known supermodels.

Men ^ typically ^ don't get any, unless they're suffering from a condition that produces excessive oestrogen.

The treatment covers your whole back, from the shoulders to just above the knees. Then you'll be asked to turn onto your back, while the therapist massages the front of your thighs ^ in people with lots of cellulite, this part is especially painful ^ and your stomach.

After just one session, the condition of my skin had improved visibly. It felt softer, due to the exfoliating qualities of the treatment, smoother and better toned.

Will I be going back for more? Well, does Naomi look good in a bikini?

The Treatment:

What it is: Endermologie, a new cellulite treatment programme

What it promises: ``It uses advanced technology to combine subatmospheric pressure with a state-of-the-art mechanical massage to enhance your slimmer, trimmer figure and eliminate rippling effects of cellulite" ± in other words, cellulite-free thighs in just three weeks

How it works: It's about ten times stronger than normal anti-cellulite massage

Pain rating: 1/2 out of 5, depending on the severity of your cellulite

How long it lasts: 35-minute sessions

What it costs: e100 per session or e1,000 for 12 sessions. Esprit is currently offering a special discount of e50 on your first session

Where to get it: Esprit Hair and Beauty Salon, Unit 1, Customs House Square, IFSC, Dublin 1. 01-8291745

What it delivers: Twelve sessions at a frequency of about three a week are recommended for long-lasting results, but in mild cases you should expect to see an improvement after just one. My skin felt firmer, smoother and better toned after a single session

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Rude health: Cellulite challenge

Sunday, August 01, 2004

By Miriam Boland

What it is: A non-invasive cellulite treatment comprising 35-minute sessions once or twice weekly for about four to six weeks.

What it promises: Reharmonisation of the connective tissue, increasing the blood and lymph circulation and promoting the elimination of metabolic waste.

How it works: A therapist uses a hand-held massager to increase circulation and break up the fat cells.

The benefits: The intensity of the treatment makes you feel as if the fat is shifting from the problem areas. It also encourages a healthier lifestyle.

The downside: The treatment can be uncomfortable and painful at times and the cellulite doesn't completely disappear.

The result: Although cellulite isn't wiped out, a course of at least five treatments results in a more contoured body and smoother, firmer skin

The cost: One treatment including bodysuit is €120; five treatments cost €500 and 10 treatments cost €1,000 (including one free treatment and bodysuit)

Where to get it: Buttercups, The Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, South William Street, Dublin 2, 01-6794866

Cellulite is fat and, because of the way female fat cells are packaged, it is exclusive to women. Unfortunately for me, the cellulite blight skipped my mother's genes and landed firmly on mine.

So firmly, in fact, that I have considered cosmetic surgery to get rid of it. But before resorting to going under the knife, I decided to try a less invasive method - a French technological treatment called endermologie, or the LPG method.

The brochure explains that endermologie works on the basis that cellulite forms as fat builds up in the adipocytes (fat cells) and the surrounding areas begin to retain water.

As the adipocytes grow, the envelopes surrounding them lose their shape, resulting in the dreaded orange-peel effect.

Because of the reduction in blood circulation cellulite is self-sustaining, so no amount of exercise, dieting or liposuction will shift it.

The only solution, according to the endermologie blurb, is to stimulate cell tissue and blood and lymph circulation.

In the salon, I had to wear the LPG bodywear, which is a white body-stocking. The therapist used a hand-held device similar to an electronic massager connected to the endermologie machine.

She described the treatment as a sort of deep electronic massage on my skin. Different frequencies on the system produce different intensities, and the higher the frequency, the more intensive the treatment. The first frequency is set at about 3.5 and by the end of the course it should build up to seven.

As the therapist swept the device in straight lines and circular motions over the problem areas, she explained that the treatment was not so much painful as uncomfortable.

To get the best out of it, she advised that I grit my teeth and bear the highest frequency I could.

As I have a low pain threshold I was ready to run out of the room, but I was assured that during the first treatment I'd feel no more than a sensation of suction.

I felt an odd pulling sensation; this got a bit more uncomfortable as a higher frequency was used on my thighs, where more hypodermal fat cells live.

When the frequency reached 6.5 there was a severe pinching sensation. I could feel every lymph gland being pulled and deeply massaged.

"All the waste in your fat cells is being decongested and ready to flush out," assured the therapist.

To get the best results, I was advised to eat healthy, low-fat foods, take lots of exercise and drink plenty of water. After the first couple of treatments, my cellulite seemed lumpier than usual. There was also slight bruising on the backs of my legs after a high-frequency treatment.

But five treatments later my bottom is more pert and the skin on the back of my thighs is much firmer and smoother.