



The Fat Freezer

CoolSculpting, a noninvasive alternative to liposuction, is one of the hottest treatments right now. The question is: How well does it actually work?

It's rare when a fat-fighting technology fulfills early promises, which is why doctors across the country are talking about CoolSculpting. Approved by the FDA in 2010, the device (sometimes called Zeltiq, the name of the manufacturer) uses freezing temperatures to kill fat cells for results comparable to liposuction—but with no incisions, anesthesia, or painful recovery. “Until now, we couldn’t perform permanent fat reduction without surgery,” says Arielle Kauvar, a New York City dermatologist and a clinical professor of dermatology at New York University School of Medicine. “This procedure doesn’t just shrink fat cells; it kills them so they cannot return.” CoolSculpting was developed not for obese people but for those with small problem areas, such as love handles, midriff rolls, and excess abdominal fat. A doctor or technician isolates the area

in the vicelike grip of a U-shaped appliance that acts as a heat extractor. Once the skin is protected with an antifreeze gel pad, the cooling begins, lasting up to an hour until the fat underneath freezes. The first five minutes can be uncomfortable (“It feels like sitting next to a block of ice,” says Kauvar), but numbness gradually sets in. “We never give pain medication,” she says. Within three months, the dead fat cells flush out of the body. Some patients report pain or small twinges during the first weeks and mild numbness, but there is no actual nerve damage. Currently, no appliances exist for the neck, arms, and thighs, limiting treatments (which cost \$750 to \$1,500 each) to the trunk of the body. That hasn’t slowed demand, says Kauvar. “We don’t need to show before and afters. Patients come in knowing from friends that they can lose a full size.” —J.K.

“I speak two languages, English and body.” —Mae West