

Fight cellulite

Getting rid of unattractive, lumpy skin can be an exercise in frustration, unless you do it the right way

By Bernadette Abraham

The world over, women spend big bucks on anti-cellulite treatments and products, which have only one thing in common — none of them work. Although some treatments and products seem to lessen lumpy, dimpled skin, the effects are temporary. If they were permanent, all women would always be cellulite-free.

By understanding what exactly cellulite is and what causes it, you'll be able to get rid of it — without emptying your wallet.

A SYNONYM FOR 'FAT'

To begin with, cellulite is a fancy word for fat. The cellulite that appears on a person's hips, thighs and buttocks is the same fat deposited elsewhere on the surface of the body. It has a defining characteristic, though — a lumpy, cottage cheese-like appearance. Cellulite is found directly beneath the skin's surface, right above the muscle and fascia. Tiny bands of fibre, called ligaments, run from the fascia through the fat and get attached to the skin, thereby creating compartments of fat.

Your genes, gender, the thickness of your skin and age are factors determining the amount of cellulite you have — if you have it at all, that is. While men tend to have horizontal or criss-cross shaped patterns of fat pockets, women's fat pockets tend to be shaped like honeycombs, making the fat bulge under the

AT A GLANCE

If you're determined to get rid of your cellulite, here's the best way to do it:



- Eat five to six meals daily to keep your sugar and energy levels stable.
- Eat balanced meals.
- Exercise portion control.
- Avoid sugar and refined foods.
- Exercise; do cardio and strength training at least three days a week.

skin when they put on weight. Men tend to have thicker skin than women, which is why cellulite is less visible in men. Slim women are more prone to developing cellulite as they age; their skin becomes thinner over time.

THE GOOD NEWS

Although cellulite is unattractive, it doesn't pose a health risk the way visceral fat does. Visceral fat is the fat that surrounds your abdomen and internal organs. It's linked to heart disease, diabetes, stroke and other

chronic conditions and diseases. Moreover, you can be thin, even underweight, and still have dangerous amounts of visceral fat around your organs.

People who are thin and don't exercise, and those who are apple-shaped (or have a 'beer belly') are also most likely to carry high amounts of visceral fat. Exercise can quickly and drastically reduce visceral fat.

NOT JUST GENES

How physically active you are also directly impacts how much cellulite you have. Exercise decreases your chances of developing cellulite because it helps keep your body fat percentage within a normal range and strengthens your muscles, both of which result in smoother-looking skin. So, any exercise programme that causes weight loss reduces the amount of stored fat, which will diminish the dimpling to an extent.

THE SOLUTION

Here's the bottom line: cellulite can only be reduced with a combination of diet and exercise. Follow a balanced diet and perform resistance training exercises, combined with moderate amounts of aerobic exercise, on a regular basis.

Doing the above will enhance your muscle tone and reduce your overall body fat percentage,

thereby reducing cellulite or preventing its development.

GETTING STARTED

Here's a five-step guide that will help you eradicate cellulite:

1 EAT FIVE TO SIX MEALS DAILY

This will ensure that your blood sugar levels — and therefore your energy levels — remain stable through the day. This will also keep your metabolism optimised. A good meal plan comprises breakfast, a mid-morning mini-meal, lunch, a mid-afternoon mini-meal and dinner.

2 EAT BALANCED AND HEALTHY MEALS

Combine a lean protein, starchy carbohydrate and vegetables at every meal. Protein and complex carbohydrates require more energy to digest and, therefore, help you burn more calories. For example,

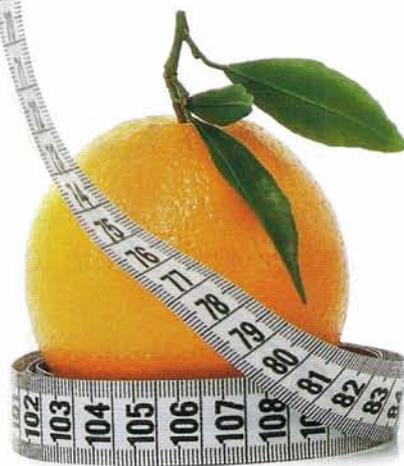
combine grilled fish, steamed brown rice and a garden salad with balsamic vinaigrette to eat balanced meal.

3 CONTROL YOUR PORTIONS

Eating every three to three-and-a-half hours helps you gauge your meal portions. If you're feeling full four to five hours after a meal your previous meal was too large. Learn to listen to your body.

4 AVOID SUGAR AND REFINED FOODS

Eliminate sugar and refined foods, such as white bread and white rice, from your diet. These foods often cause rapid blood sugar spikes, which can hinder your fat loss effort. By eliminating these foods from your diet, you will immediately have more energy and lose fat over time.



5 EXERCISE

It doesn't have to be complicated to be effective. Strength training can easily be achieved with your own body weight, dumbbells, elastic bands and machines.

There are three important variables with exercise: duration, frequency and intensity. It's best to perform cardio and strength training at least three days a week. Beginners can start with only 12 minutes a day on a daily basis and gradually build up to an hour, three or four times a week. Also, exercise hard enough so that it's difficult to talk to someone next to you, but not to the point that you can't converse.

If you're still unsure about how to get started, consult with a certified personal trainer to design a programme that's right for you. ■

The writer is a certified fitness professional and personal trainer



BEWARE OF GIMMICKS

There are several 'anti-cellulite solutions' available in the market and most don't work. We examine the most popular ones

1. CREAMS AND DIETARY PILLS

Creams and lotions don't have the ability to penetrate the skin's surface and rearrange the fat cells lying beneath. Over-the-counter pills are also a scam. In 2000, the US Federal Trade Commission filed a lawsuit against Rexall Sundown, Inc., because the company made false and unsubstantiated claims while

marketing its dietary supplement, Cellasene, positioning it as a cellulite treatment. Unfortunately, other companies have emerged, promising the next miracle solution to fix it.

2. BODY WRAPS AND MESSAGES

Fat cells are like giant marshmallows that can be compressed and that's exactly what body wrap treatments and

massages do. Immediately after such treatments, your skin may look smooth. In a short while, though, the fat cells will bounce back to normal.

3. SURGERY

Liposuction is a surgical procedure designed to remove fatty deposits from localised areas of the body. Although it can shape the body, it doesn't really remove cellulite. In fact, cellulite can become

more apparent after liposuction because the skin becomes lax after surgery.

4. LASER

When a laser is used to reduce cellulite, the procedure combines a tissue massage with laser energy or infrared light. While this may burn some fat cells, the results are short-lived. The procedure can also be very expensive.