

**THE
COURTNEY
AND JEN
SHOW**

CAN YOU REALLY
BE BEST FRIENDS
FOR EVER?

**TENDING
THE LADY
GARDEN**

HOW YOUR
PRIVATES
ARE ABOUT
TO BECOME
BIG BUSINESS

**FREEZE
YOUR FAT**

THE QUICK FIX
TREATMENT THAT
REALLY WORKS

JEWELS & THE CROWN

LOVE, SCANDAL AND ROYALTY: THE WALLIS SIMPSON
COLLECTION GOES UNDER THE HAMMER

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FAT FREEZE

FEAR OF FLAB DRIVES WOMEN TO EXTREME MEASURES, FROM MIRACLE PILLS TO LIPOSUCTION. SO WHEN **KATE SPICER** HEARD ABOUT A NEW PROCEDURE THAT SIMPLY FREEZES AWAY POCKETS OF FAT, SHE HAD TO TRY IT

fat in the body is useful for things such as good skin, reproduction and staying alive. In food it ensures a pleasing experience that delivers satisfaction. Yet sane women of normal weight are obsessed by fat; they trim it off meat and refuse roast potatoes as if they were mouldy. In this age of fat phobia, the paranoia is so acute that people play the "death weight" game as if it were truth or dare. ("At which weight would you rather die than wear a bikini?")

Fat phobia is complex and it's everywhere. "New pills to stop you piling on the pounds" or the "Wonder pill to fight the flab" make the front page of certain tabloids with the excitable frequency of knife crime or illegal immigrant scare stories.

Fatties are the bogeymen. It is not hyperbole to describe the treatment of fat people as persecution, the excuse being that half of adults in Britain are overweight or obese, and obesity-related illness costs the NHS £4.2 billion a year. When it comes to fat in all its forms, few manage to be rational. Including me.

Zeltiq CoolSculpting is the latest in noninvasive fat-fighting technology. Popular in America, it is exclusive to Harvey Nichols currently, but if it does prove effective, no doubt there will be one on every high street in the future.

The machine is a vacuum/freezer hybrid that sucks up your loose skin and subcutaneous fat and freezes it, prompting apoptosis, a kind of fat-cell suicide. It costs £800 a pop, and the manufacturers claim it can remove 20% of fat cells from targeted areas and say it is harmless. Of course, when Style's beauty editor was looking for a guinea pig, I stuck my hand up. Nothing beats quick-fix fat removal.

I'm surprised to hear, however, that it wasn't invented by Marjorie Dawes from Little Britain's Fat Fighters, because it's really humiliating. The indignity of seeing my jelly roll sucked into a see-through chamber mixes with a cheery buzz that I'll soon have less fat. This is the holy grail of idiots, that less fat equals more happy.

After the sucker is removed, my lower abdomen is cold, red and numb, like a slab of cold butter. I have something like a clawing period pain and, bent over double with face and stomach resting on a consulting table, I breathe heavily into the hygienic paper sheet. My mouth is watering with nausea. Worse, underneath the pain, which will fade, is the enduring discomfort of shame.

Patrick Mallucci, a consultant plastic surgeon at the Royal Free Hospital who specialises in body sculpting, says: "I see a huge increase in women in their thirties and forties wanting to remain attractive. The problem is, while they might work hard at it, they cannot control where they put weight on as they get closer to menopause." Those women don't see changing hormones, they see fat. The same goes for new mothers, he says, who "fight" to get their bodies back in shape. "We live in a climate and era of fat fear. Fat just isn't that tolerated."

Women are as cavalier about fat as they are about their fertility. "Oh,

I'll just freeze my eggs" and "Oh, I'll just get liposuction" betray a foolish confidence in medicine and passive solutions. All sensible surgeons will tell you straight off that liposuction categorically is not a way to lose weight.

The consultant plastic surgeon Charles Nduka says: "I turn away people who see liposuction as a means of weight loss." And even people who are suited to it, "with a high level of activity and a controlled diet who have a stubborn pocket of fat to remove... will put the weight back on if they relax back into an unhealthy lifestyle".

I notice some change around my midriff. More change than I have ever seen from the slimming pills I once bought, or belief-suspending cellulite creams I have occasionally fallen on in a prebeach panic. Not as much change, mind, as a week of eating well, exercising and doing sit-ups. But, God knows, all this has nothing to do with finding a real cure, and the fact that halal slimming pills are now available means even devout Muslims can be conned along with the rest of us.

Cures and quick fixes are decoys. Post-Freud, and even more post-Susie Orbach, it's common to see fat as a manifestation of issues. When it comes to fat — gaining it, losing it, obsessing about it — we literally punch, slap and pinch ourselves. What is really going on is self-abuse.

"Fat is a quantifiable thing to project underlying issues onto. It is perceived as something controllable," says Dr Jillian Owen, a psychologist specialising in confidence and body image. "There's a sense that 'if I follow this diet, or fix this, it's all going to be all right'. Hating body fat is rarely about fat, it's about low self-esteem."

Of course you can remove fat from your body naturally, but putting faith and hope in quick fixes is infinitely more fun and even, possibly, more sane than the phenomenal discipline, nay obsession, required truly to eliminate excess fat, real or imagined.

"Extreme dieting and quick fixes such as cosmetic surgery set you up for an emotional rollercoaster ride. You cannot and will not be able to sustain these results," says Tracy Anderson, Madonna's personal trainer. "The only way to change your body, and sustain this change, is through movement and the design of your muscular structure. This is the only way to keep the skin tight and pulled to the muscle. There are no quick fixes. It will take hard work and determination."

It's a bitter pill, it's cheap, it takes time and it works. I hate to tell Anderson this, but there is absolutely no way it'll take off. ●

I NOTICE MORE CHANGE AROUND MY MIDRIF THAN I HAVE EVER SEEN FROM PILLS OR CELLULITE CREAMS

CoolSculpting by Zeltiq is exclusively available in Britain at Beyond Medspa at Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, SW1, 020 7201 8595; beyondmedspa.co.uk. £800 per treatment area



IT WORKED FOR ME

By Claire Collinson-Jones, 40

"My initial consultation for the fat-freezing treatment at Harvey Nichols was quite an experience. The ladies working in the Medispa are walking advertisements for their art and made me want to have everything made over.

I was really impressed at how the clinic manages your expectations — there are no false promises. This isn't a weight-loss treatment, it's for slim, fit women with one problem area they can't improve through diet or exercise. Luckily, I turned out to be a perfect candidate. I'm a slim size 8, but, despite cycling 10 miles a day, I have a patch of middle-aged bottom underhang that I just can't shift. Magda charmingly referred to this pocket of fat as my "banana roll".

I lay down on my front and she produced a daunting device like a vacuum cleaner. Once she had what she called "good suction" on my thigh, she left me reading a book. Each leg took an hour, and it felt fine — a little cold, but not painful. In fact, on the second leg I had a nap. I imagine it might hurt on the stomach, but I felt comfortable and safe.

My bum was a little bruised and oddly cold the next day, but this soon faded. Four weeks on, I've definitely seen a difference. It would probably only be visible to others if I was in a bikini, but I can finally see a distinction between my bum and leg where before there was no man's land. I haven't lost any weight, it's simply a change in my silhouette.

I'd definitely recommend the treatment to anyone who fits the profile. I feel like my bottom has been put back where it used to be. That's a pretty happy ending."