

NEW BEAUTY

DRINKING MORE WATER WILL REDUCE CELLULITE. FALSE.

In fact, the idea that drinking more water will help any skin condition is erroneous unless you're truly medically dehydrated. Nor does drinking more water eliminate any cellulite-causing toxins. Overhydration can actually increase the appearance of cellulite.

5 cellulite MYTHS

LIPOSUCTION REMOVES CELLULITE. FALSE.

Because tight bands of fibrous tissue cause cellulite, extracting the fat layer that resides just under the skin may actually worsen that dimpled look. "I would recommend liposuction for contour improvements in patients with stubborn fat deposits, but I would never recommend liposuction to anyone as a primary cellulite treatment," says Boynton Beach, Florida, plastic surgeon David Rosenstein, MD.

EXERCISE WILL PREVENT CELLULITE. FALSE.

Even the fittest female athlete can develop cellulite. Still, the less fat you have, the less likely it is to spill over that web of fibrous bands, so by all means, exercise away to burn fat and increase muscle.

CELLULITE ONLY OCCURS IN WOMEN. FALSE.

Some men do get cellulite, and industry data show that at least 6,000 American males sought treatment for it last year. Recent research suggests that cellulitic males may have lower levels of the hormone androgen. Still, far fewer males get the dimples. One reason: Male connective tissue lies in a firmer crisscross pattern than the female connective-tissue matrix.

What is cellulite, really?

What it's not is excess fat. Rather, cellulite is fat that is bulging out of pockets between thick, fibrous bands of connective tissue in the subarchitecture of the skin. No one really knows what causes the condition, but experts today agree it's a combination of factors that includes genetics, hormones and aging. "It's a multifactorial problem," says New York City plastic surgeon Alan Matarasso, MD. "It's not like a nose job, where you can just take the bump out of a nose and it's fixed."

One of the many hypothesized explanations is that as we age, the levels of enzymes needed to break down stored fat are decreased. Collagen and elastin bundles break down, weakening the dermis. The connective tissue anchoring skin to muscles also weakens, and body fat pops up through the lattice, causing that uneven appearance. Other theories point to problems in capillary, venous and lymphatic microcirculation.

But does all this mean that cellulite is a disease? Washington, D.C., dermatologist Tina Alster, MD, doesn't think so. "That just puts further negative connotations on what already has negative cosmetic connotations. There's no downside other than cosmetic in terms of one's health."

What does the future hold?

Dr. Alster sees a bright future for cellulite treatment in the United States, with the newest technologies involving injectables

and more noninvasive mechanical devices. "We're going to see a much more concerted effort to treat this," she says. "And just as we're getting better at addressing things like wrinkles and tattoos, we're getting better at treating cellulite."

Dr. Matarasso agrees, adding, "There have been tremendous advances in technology and technology, and with a greater understanding of the causes of cellulite, the field can anticipate much more research."

One area of research involves an injection for localized fat called phosphatidylcholine, a substance extracted from soy lecithin, used in a treatment called mesotherapy. Approved in some European countries for cardiac uses, the substance was widely employed in Brazil for cellulite treatment until safety concerns led to a government ban two years ago. Studies on safety and effectiveness are now ongoing.

More studies are also under way on noninvasive devices using methodologies of infrared, radiofrequency and ultrasound. One such device is Titan, which utilizes infrared light source with a wavelength designed to uniformly heat the deep dermis while still protecting the skin through continuous-contact cooling. "I think we're entering a new era where treatment will not need to be invasive to be effective," says Dr. Alster.

A HEALTHY DIET WILL PREVENT CELLULITE. FALSE.

Eating well is always a good idea, but specific foods won't prevent or cure cellulite. Still, junk food that makes you fat may make you more prone to dimples. And beware of all those so-called anti-cellulite supplements. There's no proof that they're effective.