

BEACH-READY *belly*

It's not about visions of perfection – sometimes, you just want a quick confidence boost before you bare all on the beach. These three treatments offer to do just that



THE QUICK FIX

Promising a smoother, more refined silhouette in just one hour, the Dress Size Downsize – one of a handful of new beauty treatments on offer at Josh Wood's trendy Atelier – is not your average shrink-wrap. (You know

the type: you're covered in mud, wrapped in clingfilm and left to sweat. Great for water retention, but not much else.)

With Dress Size Downsize, it's a combination of clever-sounding supercreams with dynamic, deep-tissue massage that gets results. And focusing on just one area means those results are targeted – and therefore (here's hoping) really noticeable.

The treatment begins with the application of a warm, detoxifying gel, followed by a vigorous

stomach massage. According to my therapist, this tricks the fat cells into releasing their stubborn cargo and stimulates the digestive system beneath. (It also, apparently, simulates a mild colonic.)

The massage is pretty intense, and my tummy feels tender and looks, well, rather pink. After a few minutes' rest, the area is slathered in a thick green, algae-rich mask. Instantly cooling, it's a pleasant reprieve from the earlier heat, not to mention the pinching and prodding. I get a big, fluffy white duvet to nestle under while the mask gets to work – but with my skin throbbing hot and cold, it's more invigorating than relaxing. I'm reminded that 'the treatments that hurt are the ones that work'. And it's true.

Immediately after the mask is peeled off (no rinsing required, so you really can be in and out in an hour), my skin – now returned to a nice, normal colour – is smoother and tighter, and my midriff looks less plump, less puffy. It's not quite the flat stomach of my dreams but there's definitely the beginning of some definition – the sides of my tummy have a hollowed-out look to them last seen several years (and dress sizes) ago. Not bad for an hour spent lying down. *EMMA LAURENCE Dress Size Downsize costs £85 for 60 minutes (plus consultation) or £650 for a course of eight at Josh Wood Lansdowne Atelier, London W11; joshwoodcolour.com*



Emma, above, tried a one-hour stomach-shrinking massage at Josh Wood



Coolsculpting is a medically approved fat-freezing treatment invented by Harvard scientists. The cups are placed on pockets of grabbable flesh – like my midriff – that are sucked up and frozen for an hour, and it's claimed the freezing process destroys 20% of the fat cells in the treated area (it's all written up in peer-reviewed journals), which are then metabolised and slowly expelled over the next six to 12 weeks.

I was a little concerned about the safety aspects, but reassured by the fact that Coolsculpting's scientists have invented anti-freeze gel pads to protect your skin (don't be tempted by copycat treatments, which don't offer this) and the dead fat cells are metabolised slowly, so there's no chance of your liver going into meltdown.

Does it hurt? It's a little strange as your flesh is cooled to freezing, but after that it's quite relaxing. When the cup comes off for the grand reveal, I'm confronted with a bright-pink frozen stick of lard. Not very elegant, but rather exciting: something has undeniably happened.

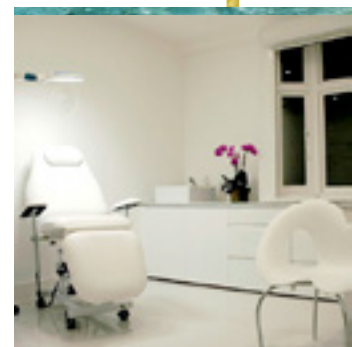
While I'm still gawping at the frozen lump of flesh, wondering how many chips have been nuked, my therapist dives in, breaking up the 'butter stick' with a firm massage.

My midriff is put through two rounds of freezing, above and below the bellybutton, and I leave the clinic feeling sore, but not so bad that I can't go back to work. The next day I feel like I've been given a good kick in the stomach. The treated area is puffy and swollen and still

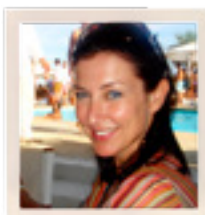
pretty numb; it feels bruised, though it doesn't look it.

It's a couple of weeks before things feel normal again – and it takes the three months they said it would to see any visible changes, but... the difference is undeniable. I haven't suddenly acquired a Jessica Rabbit, 22" waist, but I have – and this is a first – developed some semblance of muscle definition and there is definitely less flab.

Three pregnancies and two C-sections mean my stomach will never be completely flat, but there's visibly less of it and I actually have a waist. I'm pretty happy with the result. **SHARON WALKER** » *Coolsculpting costs from £525 per treatment, at Medicetics, London W2; 020 7402 2033*



'The difference is undeniable,' says Sharon, below, of her Coolsculpting treatment at Medicetics (above)



THE 'SOFT SURGERY' OPTION

I'm far too squeamish to be sliced and diced for the sake of a bikini, but if I could spot reduce, without knives, needles or anaesthetic, would I? You bet, which is how I find myself in Medicetics' smart London clinic with a significant portion of my midriff vacuumed into a suction cup. It's pretty pricey for a one-off treatment, but I'm curious to see if it really works.

Cathy, below, felt lighter and brighter after three days at L'Albereta Espace Vitalité Henri Chenot Spa, near Milan



ups and assessments throughout, chats with nutritionists and everything personalised. I was put on the Biolight diet (healthy, lighter eating), but there are even stricter diets for the longer stays.

The programme is based on the holistic vision of scientist Henri Chenot, who believes that most problems stem from poor digestion. Each day features a hydro-aromatherapy bath, phyto-mud wrap sessions (painted in green goo, wrapped in plastic and left on a heated water-filled mattress – I liked this), then the hydro-jet (but not this, although it's good for toning, so grit teeth). On top of that you get an energetic muscle-tendon massage using suction cups to move fluids along and help eliminate waste, plus electro-stimulation to release energy along the meridians.

It was perhaps this that resulted in my rather strong reaction involving an *Exorcist*-like purging in said toilet. The massage had released a host of toxins and, wracked with headache, my body had abruptly reacted. Thankfully, the doctor was on hand to help and I felt thoroughly looked after. They told me it was due to all the stress and tension I had stored up and can happen sometimes, when patients are very run-down.

The next day, I woke feeling much better, and the day after that, better again. I practically skipped home, my stomach flatter, my skin brighter and my motivation to stay healthy at a high. Big results from a small stay. **CATHY LEVY** *The three-day Dominique Chenot Wellbeing Programme costs from around £1,088, including medical examination, at L'Albereta in Erbusco, Italy. Rooms from around £145 per night, based on two adults sharing; albereta.it/en/spa-henri-chenot*



THE DETOX RETREAT



Perhaps it's a British thing, or an 'I'll try anything for a flat stomach' thing, but my ability to grin and bear it seemed pretty high on a recent detox retreat in the picturesque hills of Erbusco, just outside Milan. Okay, so it was five-star luxury, I was in a sumptuous suite and everyone was charming, but still, I did find myself doing a lot of teeth-gritting while being hosed down by a fierce jet of warm then cold water, dressed only in paper pants and a fetching shower hat... or later hugging a toilet bowl (more on that to come).

However, as much as I wanted to label my detox at L'Albereta Espace Vitalité Henri Chenot Spa somewhat hateful, I couldn't. I ended up converted – brighter eyes, more toned skin and a flatter stomach reflected in the mirror, plus 3lb lighter, and all in just three days (on the shorter 'Dominique Chenot' programme). There's a reason these detoxes are beloved of smart Italians wanting to get back their 'figura'.

Run with expert precision, the programmes include medical check-

5

EASY WAYS TO FEEL FLATTER IN FIVE DAYS

- 1 Eat very light or not at all after 6pm. It really works.
- 2 Replace your afternoon snack with a sachet of miso soup – it contains natural probiotics, which noticeably improve digestion.
- 3 Vigorously massage in Clarins Tonic Body Treatment Oil (£35) every night (and morning if you have time). Skin will feel supple and smooth.
- 4 Increasing your water intake by just 500ml a day can ease bloating.
- 5 Try this mini workout twice a day: the twisted seat yoga pose (both sides); plank (30 seconds); tummy crunches (30 reps).