

## RRSPA

## Cellulite plight

LOTS OF SPA HYPE, LITTLE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE,  
AND NO MAGIC BULLET BY AIMEE LEE BALL

I HAPPEN TO LIKE COTTAGE CHEESE. MAKES A NICE BREAKFAST, SPREAD ON A WHOLE wheat bagel, or with fruit for a light lunch. I just don't want it on my thighs.

Like almost every other woman not currently a Ford model, I've become familiar with cellulite—a word that didn't enter the common parlance in this country until about 30 years ago, coined, reputedly, by the owner of a New York skin-care spa. But the dimpled, puckered, waffled, cottage-cheesy skin that sets off an alarum at the approach of bathing-suit season is certainly not new: Just look at Renoir's *Grandes Baigneuses* or Manet's models having their *dejeuner sur l'herbe*. You'd think that something so venerable, so visible, and so vanity wounding would be understood by now.

Although cellulite is sometimes referred to by the mouth-filling and scientific-sounding name dermatomyoliposclerosis (der-ma-to-my-o-lip-o-scler-o-sis), the term does not exist in recognized medical references. It's thought that almost every woman over the age of 25 has at least a smattering of cellulite, generally on the hips, thighs, and buttocks, but no one knows for sure because neither the government nor any legitimate scientific authority keeps statistics about it.

Mine is not especially gruesome, and I don't stay up nights worrying about it, but, sure, I'd prefer that every square inch of me were smooth as glass—and I have a lot of company, judging by the ever growing smorgasbord of treatments that spas, especially day spas, are pushing now. There are wraps and massages and creams and gadgets and supplements and electric zaps, even footwear based on the sandals of the Masai people (sold at Bliss spas), who apparently don't get cellulite—all with enticing assertions that they eradicate the condition. Whether it's a promise of beauty or a profile on Match.com, I tend to believe that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is, but let me get back to you about that.

Cellulite is fat, although one need not be overweight to be afflicted. Theories abound about why fat takes this particularly disagreeable form—sluggish circulation or poor lymphatic drainage, hormonal changes or heredity, free radicals or environmental toxins. All this theorizing is unsubstantiated by any real science. The subject is not investigated at the National Institutes of Health (and I, for one, am relieved that our research dollars go to cancer and AIDS). We don't even understand why cellulite seems to be the fate of most women but few men. Any “clinical stud-

## THE SMART WAY TO FIGHT CELLULITE

Even if there isn't a cure for cellulite, there are concrete steps that you can take to prevent its onset or minimize its appearance. The first thing to do is adopt the right frame of mind. This is a campaign, not a battle. It's a matter of being consistent, as the effects are usually limited and temporary, rather than trying bold one-off treatments. And mostly it's a matter of leading a healthy lifestyle. Here's what we gleaned from the experts. ■ **Have a vigorous massage regularly.** It seems to change the underlying skin structure, making cellulite less apparent. ■ **Drink plenty of water.** Keeping the skin superhydrated can plump up cellulite dimples, making them less visible. ■ **Exercise regularly to maintain or increase circulation.** Although there is no proof, there is a lot of suspicion that poor blood flow is an important factor in cellulite formation. Lack of circulation can lead to poor sustenance of fat cells, which means they get flabby, just like you do if you lie on the couch all the time. ■ **Eat a healthy diet.** It's an intrinsic part of any cellulite defense.

thetic Plastic Surgery and arguably one of the best-informed people about cellulite.

“There's definitely a genetic tendency,” says Dr. Young. “There's almost certainly some hormonal effect, but it's probably not the only factor. The best lab work shows that cellulite has something to do with the invasion of the deep layer of the dermis by fat.” Histological evidence (meaning what is seen under a microscope) offers little support for “cures” that purport to release toxins or increase circulation—“although they sound good,” says Dr. Young.

The lack of scientific explanation has led to a treatment free-for-all, rife with huckstering. Fraudulent advertising is the

wear called Lipo Slim Briefs, and the Ultima II ProCollagen Body Complex made by the behemoth Revlon corporation. The FTC generally goes after big fish, which is why many snake-oil ads go unchallenged, and in 2003, it levied a \$12 million fine against Rexall Sundown, Inc., for false claims about Cellasene, an herbal anticellulite pill that had already racked up \$40 million in sales.

Every year, new technology is unleashed against cellulite, some with the limited approval of the Food and Drug Administration, which monitors the safety and efficacy of cosmetic products and devices. Any simple, low-risk product may be categorized as a Class One device, meaning the manufacturer need not submit a pre-market approval application. (That's why Johnson + Johnson can sell Band-Aids without conducting a multimillion-dollar study.) The Endermologie sys-

Every year, new technology is unleashed against cellulite, some with the limited approval of the Food and Drug Administration.

ies” are small and financed at least in part by companies that stand to profit from favorable results. The cause remains elusive, according to Leroy Young, M.D., the chairman of the task force on emerging trends at the American Society for Aes-

responsibility of the Federal Trade Commission, and over the past decade the commission has taken aim against claims made by a “passive motion table” marketed under the name Slender You, a wrapping system sold as European Body Concepts, under-

tem of mechanical massage fits into this category. The FDA acknowledges that like a lot of other massagers, it can temporarily reduce the appearance of cellulite (*italics mine*). The Dermosonic ultrasound and the Tri-Active laser are in the same cate-

gory. On the horizon is a new generation of electrical stimulation. (See "Shedding New Light" on page 114.)

Some treatments require a plastic surgeon or dermatologist. Mesotherapy, for instance, involves the injection into the mesoderm (the skin's middle layer) of caffeine or phosphatidyl choline, one of the main components of lecithin and used in intravenous nutritional solutions. (See "A Shot in the Dark" on page 115.) Liposuction can actually make cellulite worse, creating more irregularities, according to Dr. Young. On the other hand, "injecting fat does theoretically have the possibility of smoothing things out, but not all the fat survives—there are certain areas of the body where it doesn't stay."

To the degree that the law permits, the spa industry has embraced cellulite annihilation with the fervor of a televangelist. Day spas have been particularly avid because even semi-effective treatments usually require a regime of 6, 12, or even 20 sessions, with forever-after "maintenance"—not feasible at a destination or resort spa. Promotional copy often alludes to the transitory nature of results with catch phrases like "for a special occasion" and "pre-wedding" and "to fit into that little black dress on Saturday night." These treatments generally fall into one of three categories: lymphatic drainage, high-tech, and alternative medicine. I recently turned my thighs over to more than a dozen practitioners and procedures in New York and Los Angeles, then went back to the experts for an evaluation of the claims and caveats.

#### LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE

**Le Petite Retreat Day Spa** Lysa Kustek, the owner of this Los Angeles spa, is refreshingly frank: "Nothing we can do in a spa gets rid of cellulite." But her brochure promises that the Swedish Purifying & Green Tea Retreat will "help purify the body's

## Eye of Newt

In an effort to find a cure for cellulite, the cosmetics and biotechnical industries have searched land and sea. Algae is ubiquitous in lotions and gels—its high silicon content is supposed to make the skin supple. Wheat protein is purported to form a film on the skin that tightens it, and paraffin is said to be hydrating.

Coffee and tea show up often in the formulas for wraps—for instance, the pleasant Aroma-Lift Body Therapy at Gloss Day Spa in New York. The caffeine in these substances is part of the xanthine family of chemical compounds, which dilate blood vessels, enhance circulation, and stimulate enzymes to break down fat. But there's no good evidence

Corona bottle," says Dr. Young. "Members of our society don't usually have time to devote to figuring out what does and doesn't work, so we just monitor all this as closely as we can. The arena is rampant with scams. These people are smart, and they may be devious. They stay just to the side of where they would be regulated by the FDA, and then they can say anything."

Cellap, a Swiss cosmetics company, has hitched its star to aromatase, an enzyme that regulates the formation of estrogen in skin fat cells. As estrogen increases fat-cell storage capacity, blocking it should reduce cellulite. Cellap claims that its product, Biokomplex,

**"There's no cure for cellulite. There are only things that make you swollen for a while and make it less obvious."**

that a topical product containing caffeine produces such a result. "It's a theoretical possibility but a practical improbability," says Leroy Young, M.D.

The garden and the pantry have been raided for ingredients with some claim of detoxifying or antioxidizing effects on cellulite. Cellasene, whose manufacturer was fined by the FTC for false advertising two years ago, contained ginkgo biloba, grapeseed extract, sweet clover, iodine, borage seed, fish oil, and an herb with the alarming name of bladder wrack. Other perennials include soybeans, green tea, pomegranate, geranium, horse chestnut, fennel, birch, yam, ivy, and (my personal favorite, for name alone) butcher's broom.

"Many of these are ideas out of a

which is soy based, penetrates into the deeper skin layers and replaces aromatase. In a study that involved 500 German women, 86 percent described their reaction as "satisfied" after three months of using Biokomplex.

Dr. Young wonders how much those women weighed. Aromatase is indeed involved in the production of estrogen (it's also used in therapy for estrogen-related cancers), but the overactivity of this enzyme is a problem related to obesity. "I don't understand why non-obese people would have more aromatase," says Dr. Young. "The bottom line is: There's no cure for cellulite. There are only things that make you swollen for a while and make it less obvious."

lymph system and break down cellulite to tone your skin." It starts with a basic feel-good Swedish massage, then proceeds to "color therapy": Suction cups are applied to the skin, attached by cords to a machine that emits colors—yellow is supposed to promote lymphatic drainage, which means speeding up the fluid that carries cellular waste back to the bloodstream for disposal. The treatment concludes with a relaxing green-tea bath in a copper tub (the metal is supposed to be healing) big enough to hold a pool party. But all this misses the point, according to Rhoda S. Narins, M.D., a clinical professor of dermatology at New

sleeker, which spa manager Anastasia Stevenson confirms. "It seems to me, it's a temporary fix, so why go through something that may be painful?" she asks with admirable honesty.

Sea Mountain is actually on the right track with the massage, but it should also incorporate a vigorous one. It may be the one thing that actually helps cellulite, according to Mauro Romita, M.D., the plastic surgeon who owns the Ajune Center for Beauty Synergy in New York. "If people are affluent enough to get it done on a regular basis, they can see the effects," he says. "It's like having a personal trainer."

## Vigorous massage may be the one thing that actually helps cellulite.

York University Medical School and the president-elect of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery. "The people who are helped by lymph drainage are those whose system is compromised, for instance, by surgery, so they have fluid buildup. But cellulite is not fluid."

\$125. 331 N. Larchmont Blvd., Los Angeles, 323-466-1028, [www.lprdayspa.com](http://www.lprdayspa.com)

**Sea Mountain Spa** Fighting cellulite at this Beverly Hills spa is three hours of endurance or indulgence, beginning with Japanese body brushing. A bristly thing that looks like a pot scrubber is used to remove dead skin before I'm wrapped up with seaweed, which stings my just-brushed skin. A lymphatic massage follows, then a ginger-sandalwood-and-brown-sugar scrub and a rosewater bath. The young woman tending to me in the beautifully appointed spa suite used to be a traveling massage therapist for rock bands, so I'm happily entertained but probably not any

\$375. One Woman, One Day Package. 9960 Little Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills, 818-261-0384, [www.seamountainspa.com](http://www.seamountainspa.com)

**Mandarin Oriental, New York** For the sybaritic Contour and Firm treatment, I'm scrubbed with sun-dried mineral sea salt from Brittany, massaged vigorously (to release toxins from the connective tissue) and gently (to help the lymphatic system carry the toxins away), and wrapped up with liquefied seaweed, the texture of semi-set Jello, that contains essential oils and plant extracts to "jump-start" my metabolism. Along the way, my scalp is treated with a mud made of red clay and watercress. I'm fairly sure my hair doesn't have cellulite, so this seems like merely another pleasantry, albeit an extremely pleasant pleasantry. The treatment was designed as a "fusion of ancient philosophies" with the "latest scientific advances in product," according to Tracey Chappell, the U.S. manager of projects and operations for Espa, which created the spa's

treatment menu. But when asked for any scientific research about the effects of seaweed, essential oils, or plant extracts on metabolism, or about the causal relationship of toxins to cellulite, Chappell replied, "The information you have requested is not available at this time." The idea of "detoxifying" to impact cellulite is misguided, says Brian Kinney, M.D., of Los Angeles, the vice president of the Plastic Surgery Educational Foundation, the information and research arm of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. "This broad hand waving about toxins is unsubstantiated by current research. It's a word that means whatever anybody wants it to mean, and if you pin them down, they'll say, 'We didn't mean it.'"

\$380. 80 Columbus Circle, New York, 212-805-8800, [www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com)

**Anushka Spa and Sanctuary** In the '90s, Anushka (née Ana Blau), the founder of this New York spa, got into trouble with the FTC for making claims in an infomercial called "Cellulite Free" about the effectiveness of the spa's Body Contouring Program. The FTC ordered Blau to have competent and reliable scientific evidence to back up any future product claims she made. Today the Anushka Spa offers a two-hour Model's Secret Slimmer, featuring two treatments from the five-week Intensive Body Contouring Program. Part of the spa's Cellulite Clinic menu, the program promises to allow "the body to work toward achieving a smooth, sleek silhouette." For the "thermo-jet," my legs are wrapped in cling film and something that resembles rubber bath mats, then heated to 104 degrees. The maternal Russian therapist explains that the heat is supposed to liquefy trapped fat, "like melting a stick of butter." The spa later contradicts her,

saying the heat increases circulation and eliminates water retention.

After being cooked, I don a waist-to-toe paper body sleeve for the "presso-jet." Inflating and deflating by pneumatic pressure, it supposedly stimulates lymphatic drainage more efficiently than a therapist's hands. I don't melt under its touch as I do with a good massage therapist, but it is relaxing, except for the continuous mechanical drone. "It's a very controversial subject," concedes Blau, who nevertheless believes in "decongesting," activating circulation and releasing fluid retention, "which will accentuate those dimples." Actually, fluid retention should improve the appearance of cellulite in the short term, according to Dr. Kinney. "Anything that makes your skin hydrated, which is to say waterlogged, will help fill up those irregular bumps," he says. "As soon as the hydration of the skin changes, the effect will go away."

\$119. 501 Madison Ave., New York, 212-355-6404, [www.anushkaonline.com](http://www.anushkaonline.com)

#### HIGH-TECH

**Cellulite Endermologie Center** There's a bowl of Tootsie Rolls and a box of Krispy Kremes in the lobby of this New York facility (drumming up business?), and despite the name of the place, the new kid on the block here is the Tri-Active laser, a sleek silver apparatus with a long hose attached to a blue handle. There's an audible click and a slight pulse every time the laser is activated; otherwise the treatment is barely discernible. "We test ourselves before using anything on clients," says the center's beauty director, Evie Cuellar. "There's no way you actually get rid of cellulite, but the treatments diminish its appearance."

Dr. Kinney is skeptical, noting that new lasers come out every six months. "If a doctor had followed the laser train

# Pork and Beans

**E**ndermologie, one of the most touted cellulite treatments, was developed in the mid-1980s by the French company LPG. It uses a suction-assisted device (FDA approved in 1997) that looks like the love child of a StairMaster and an octopus. A valve at the end of one long tentacle is placed over the skin, which is pinched between two cylindrical motorized rollers to give the equivalent of a deep-tissue massage. An overly enthusiastic application can lead to broken capillaries, but the experience is usually not unpleasant and generally leaves no marks. LPG claimed the machine broke up fat, which was then excreted, leading to the formation of new blood vessels and increased blood flow.

"We thought it was pretty bogus," says Bruce Shack, M.D., the chairman of the plastic-surgery department at Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, "so we set out to do an animal study to try to see the physical effects of deep mechanical massage."

blood-vessel formation. (Any exertion on the skin increases blood flow temporarily—if you slap your thigh, it turns red.) "We didn't find any of the things to be true that the company was claiming at that time," says Dr. Shack. "What we did find was a surprise to me. The treatments did cause a change in the subcutaneous tissue so that it looked different."

Here's how: Skin is connected to underlying muscles by a series of fibers called septae that divide fat into little lobules. One theory holds that cellulite results from an abnormality in the fat-septae ratio—the septae are too short. "Think of a quilt," explains Dr. Shack. "The quilting is created with underlying stitches that attach to the surface with thread. If you cut the thread, the surface is smoothed out." The Vanderbilt researchers found that massage allowed the septae to separate from the skin, easing the dimpling, and it increased the formation of collagen bands running parallel to the skin surface. But they also found that the results were

The researchers found that massage allowed the septae to separate from the skin, easing the dimpling.

The researchers used the Endermologie machine, and for guinea pigs, they chose real pigs, specifically Yucatan miniature swine, because the architecture of subcutaneous porcine skin is quite similar to that of humans. "We sent the pigs to the spa," says Dr. Shack. "We did treatments that mimicked the human condition. They were the happiest pigs—they went right up on the table."

But Dr. Shack's team found no evidence of fat metabolism or excretion, or of new

more dependent on the skill of the person operating the machine than on the machine settings. "It's kind of like hitting a baseball," he says. "There are people who are good at it."

Dr. Shack thinks mechanical massage may form a callus, so the subcutaneous layer of skin shows fewer subtleties in contour. "You begin to see it at about 10 treatments," he says, "and at 20 it's pretty much maxed out. If you stop treatment, it goes away. But this would be a good callus to have."

# Shedding New Light

The newest form of energy to be aimed at cellulite is ELOS, electrical optical synergy, a combination of infrared light and radio waves. The ELOS device, which will be marketed under the name VelaSmooth, has metal electrodes that move like rollers, producing the same kind of tissue manipulation and suction as Endermologie. But there's also a current that travels between the electrodes, preheating the skin with the infrared light, and radio waves that penetrate deeply into the skin. The promise: body recon-touring, like noninvasive liposuction. ELOS was submitted for FDA approval in the summer of 2004. Since it's classified as a medical device, only spas that have an affiliation with a doctor can use it. It's now in clinical trials at five medical offices.

But two experts are very skeptical: "If you stand next to a radio-transmission tower with a lightbulb, you'll get hot and the lightbulb will faintly glow," says Brian Kinney, M.D., the vice president of the Plastic Surgery Educational Foundation. "Cell phones radiate your head a little bit. So with powerful radio waves, you'll get blasted. Used on the face, they'll tighten the skin and burn it a little, like a mild laser. But the weight of the thighs is so much more powerful than the contractibility of the tissue. Even if you tightened the skin, there's no collagen reaction that would smooth it out enough."

Alexander Rivkin, M.D., goes even farther: "This sounds like a beefed-up Endermologie machine. I don't believe this will give us the results we're looking for."

leaving the station a few years ago, he'd have a bunch of lasers sitting around that look like a hat rack," he says. "Most lasers only penetrate 60 to 90 microns—that's like a human hair. Lasers do distinct things to your skin, but they're not likely

tion is applied via a handheld nozzle with tiny rotating ball bearings. (I can't help wondering if it wouldn't be just as effective to apply a DustBuster to myself.)

Before the treatment, she measures my waist, hips, and thighs, and afterward

We're so eager for a cure that we accept claims with no scientific corroboration—we'd exercise more discretion buying a blender.

to penetrate fat much."

\$100 per session. 100 Park Ave., New York, 212-880-6421, [www.cellulite-endermologie-center.com](http://www.cellulite-endermologie-center.com)

**Spa 415** The treatment of choice at this Beverly Hills spa is electrotherapy, similar to the electric stimulation used in physical therapy. Sixteen electrodes are placed between my navel and my knees before I'm jolted with three types of electrical surges, each lasting about 20 minutes. I'm told that many people fall asleep during the procedure—hard to imagine, as the sensations vary from a Pac-Man kind of nibbling to a vicelike grip. And Dr. Narins challenges the notion that the zaps reduce (or even affect) cellulite. "You're not trying to heal something," she says. "Cellulite doesn't occur because you have inflammation, so there's no reason for electrical stimulation to work." \$125 per session. 415 N. Crescent Dr., Beverly Hills, 310-276-8018, [www.spa415.com](http://www.spa415.com)

**Z Med Spa** Gentle ultrasound is the basis of Dermosonic treatment at this contemporary, almost clinical facility in Pasadena. The aesthetician confides that the waves are supposed to penetrate the skin, in essence warming it up before suc-

claims that I've lost half an inch in each leg just above the knee. But her technique seems imprecise—the area being measured is not marked, so it's hard to ascertain that she's returning to the exact same spot. Later spa owner Matt Medina contradicts the therapist, saying that ultrasound manipulates the tissue and is "better than conventional vibratory and suction techniques."

But when I call for a follow-up interview, he tells me, "We're not cellulite experts. As far as what constitutes a 'cellulite expert,' I doubt that you can find a definitive answer from any scientific community as to what even causes cellulite." Medina says that he chose the treatment by having his wife and her friends test various anticellulite methods at other spas, "and it wouldn't still be here if it wasn't working for some people. We have happy clients." As for the warm-up theory, he postulates: "If you're going to mold something out of wax, wouldn't it be easier if the wax was warmer?" But Dr. Romita is doubtful. Even if you're trying to get rid of fluid with high temperatures, he says, "you can't get that kind of heat with external ultrasound. There's no clinical evidence that ultrasound is of any advantage. It might increase blood supply, but it has no effect on cellulite."

\$225, full body; \$125, upper or lower body only. 1167 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena, 626-441-4906, [www.zmedspa.com](http://www.zmedspa.com)

#### ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

**Yin Beauty and Care** In Chinese medicine, cellulite is called “orange skin” (a reference to texture, not color) and is regarded as a symptom of imbalance. At this small, pristine New York facility, treatment is a four-hand affair. A doctor of Chinese medicine starts by looking at my tongue and diagnosing an imbalance in my spleen, then joins a China-trained aesthetician in pummeling me like a piece of veal being readied for schnitzel. My skin feels smooth, but I’m ready for some Advil when I leave, and the therapists themselves look wasted. (They renew their energy by doing the breathing exercises of qigong.) The beating I’ve taken is supposed to transfer energy from their hands to the “vital points” in my body that need adjusting, each corresponding to an organ or tissue. (In fact, it may be the vigor of the massage that can make this treatment effective.) As for the pain, the therapist says it’s proof that toxins are blocked in that spot. “Toxins” seem to be as much of a bugaboo in ancient Eastern philosophies as in modern spa approaches to cellulite, but as Dr. Kinney reminds me, “We’re not talking about lead paint on inner-city apartment buildings.”

\$280, full body; \$150, upper or lower body only. 59 E. 79th St., New York, 212-879-5040

**Ayurveda’s Beauty Care** According to India’s 5,000-year-old system of medicine, any disease or dis-ease (for instance, cellulite) results from an imbalance of the body’s five energies: fire, water, earth, air, and ether. An à la carte cellulite treatment at this New York spa begins by taking the pulse to determine an individual’s con-

stitution, or dosha: pitta (fire and water), vata (air and ether) and kapha (water and earth). For me (pitta-vata), the session includes *marma abhyanga* (\$100), a shiatsu-like massage of 107 pressure points all over the body; *shila abhyanga* (\$125), using various kinds of stones coated with essential oils; and *potli swedhan* (\$95), warm cloth bundles filled with herbs, grains, or seeds. Finally I’m placed in an individual steam cabinet and given barley tea. The treatment feels like a hot stone massage combined with a steam bath and those little hot towels that flight attendants hand out in business class.

But the ultimate attack on cellulite, according to Naina Marballi, the Ayurvedacharya (master) who treats me, can be experienced only in India. It involves lying over the smoldering coals of a fire made of herbs on a bed of wood chosen for a particular dosha. Here *dhuri*, as it’s called, would incur the wrath of the fire department. But this is the theory: Cellulite reflects an imbalance in the life force, and the heat allows the herbs to penetrate the body to restore equilibrium.

“Getting your core body temperature above 106 can kill you,” observes Dr. Kinney, “so how much are they going to heat you up? Heat that doesn’t damage skin can’t tighten connective tissue enough to affect cellulite. A firefighter who gets burned has connective tissue that’s so tight it’s scarred, but you can’t get skin so hot that it contracts that much.”

99 University Place, New York, 212-529-3300, [www.ayurvedabeautycare.com](http://www.ayurvedabeautycare.com)

**Sea Change Healing Center** Last summer Gwyneth Paltrow was photographed at a movie premiere in a strapless dress that revealed circular bruises on her back—the footprints of the ancient Chinese therapy called cupping. At this New York spa,

the technique is offered as “natural cellulite removal” (the promise of a sign on the sidewalk). First my thighs are spread with a cream made of esoteric and enigmatic herbs that are said to stimulate circulation. Then small plastic jars, like those that would hold a three-minute egg, are applied, and suction is created with a pump. This is called valve cupping; it’s the version called fire cupping, in which suction is created with heated glass jars, that often produces those circular marks. Either way, the result is supposed to be increased blood flow to the affected area and (you guessed it) release of toxins. All this talk about toxicity is bogus, according to Dr. Narins. “Cellulite is not caused by toxins. If there are treatments that make you feel better, fine. When you feel better, you think you look better, but it’s no different from a manicure or dying your hair.” \$165 per session. 31 W. 26th St., New York, 212-889-7300, [www.seachangehealing.com](http://www.seachangehealing.com)

By this time next year, there will surely be some new and improved addition to the anticellulite menu at spas. We’re so eager for a cure that we accept claims with no scientific corroboration—we’d exercise more discretion buying a blender. Remember the classic recommendation for processing information on any subject: Consider the source. “A lot of the literature is baloney,” says Dr. Romita, “and there’s not a lot of financial or academic impetus for doing good studies.” It’s fine to get kneaded and pummeled and maybe even zapped so long as you recognize that results are temporary—and will be until our knowledge of cellulite is more than skin deep.

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