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GETTING RID OF CELLULITE

What causes those annoying dimples and lumps on thighs and hips?
And what's really effective in treating them?

BY MELISSA ROMERO



Dr. George Bitar's Fairfax office is the only place in the area to get FDA-approved CelluSmooth.

Be wary of creams and compression clothes that claim to get rid of cellulite. "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is," Bitar warns.

"How do I get rid of cellulite?" It's a question dermatologists and plastic surgeons get a lot. Unfortunately, most admit a simple answer. "If there was some easy way to get rid of cellulite, we'd all be doing it by now," says Maral Kibarian Skelsley, director of medical surgery at Georgetown Medical Center. The silver lining is that you're not alone in the fight against the lumps and bumps that can cover thighs, hips, even arms and the stomach. Some 90 percent of women have cellulite—most just don't care to admit it.

WHAT IS IT?

"Cellulite is, unfortunately, very much of a female condition," says Fairfax plastic surgeon George Bitar.

Cellulite is caused when fat cells trapped between fibrous bands push up into the skin.



In men, septae are crisscrossed and keep the fat in place. In women, they're more like a mesh, keeping the fat in place. In women, they're more like a mesh, keeping the fat in place.

Dr. Bitar says that in men, the bands are more crisscrossed, keeping the fat in place. In women, they're more like a mesh, keeping the fat in place.

photograph by ANDREW PROFF

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HOPE VS. HYPE

Can lotions and creams reduce cellulite? What about liposuction? We asked skin-care experts to tell us what really works.



ARE LASERS THE MAGIC BULLET?

LASER THERAPY

HOW IT WORKS: A plastic surgeon makes small incisions to the cellulite-laden area. A probe placed through the incisions and under the skin emits a laser, melting fat bulges and cutting through the fibrous bands that pull on and cause dimples in the skin. (Rohini Kathleen Walker, a plastic surgeon on *Washingtonian's* most recent Top Doctors list, offers Cellulaze, while George Bitar, another top plastic surgeon, offers CelluSmooth.)

THE VERDICT: Experts say that the new minimally invasive lasers are revolution-

while George Bitar, another top plastic surgeon, offers CelluSmooth.)

Even then, it's likely that patients would need annual touchups. Still, laser therapy is "as close to a magic bullet as we have," says Bitar, whose practice is one of 22 medical centers in the country that use CelluSmooth, a similar laser device.



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