

Beautiful Beautiful BEACH-READY BODIES

By: Dr. Jon F. Harrell

We're rapidly approaching the summer months now – a time for vacations, reunions, cruises, sitting by the pool or going to the beach. It's time to pull out those shorts, the tank tops and uh-oh – the bathing suit. A quick trip to the mirror confirms that maybe we didn't quite work the holiday food off as fast as we thought we would. Yes the suit is definitely tighter than we remember. My goodness, where did those bulges come from? And those dimples on the thighs! What's that all about? And for ladies, perhaps the top of the bikini isn't looking the way it used to – or perhaps it never looked the way you wanted. And guys, well there's nothing lovely about 'love' handles and breast tissue. Well just buy a couple more T shirts for the pool or beach.

As a plastic surgeon I am accustomed to seeing seasonal trends in the concerns my patients have. Each April and May, a number of patients are seeing me to help them 'tune up' for the summer months. Most of the time the concern is usually one they've had for a while but the summer season just brings it to the forefront of consciousness. All of us hopefully have some respect about the way we want to look. However, the less we wear the more we share –visually that is – with whoever is either lucky enough or unlucky enough to see us. Most fashions are designed to flatter us and compensate for the various areas we may not like. However, looking good in a bathing suit can be a challenge for many of us. Not that this is the end all or be all for us. Nevertheless, in general we humans want and prefer to look good rather than bad. Let's assume that the reader is an individual that wants to look good – particularly in a bathing suit. What can he or she do?

First jettison the potato chips, avoid the fast food and invest in a personal trainer or get a gym membership. Chances are that changes in diet and exercise will give most of us the look we're after without having to sleep at the gym and subsist on tofu. However, since I am a plastic surgeon let's look at what lies beyond diet, exercise and general lifestyle changes.

LIPOSUCTION

Liposuction has continually improved over the years to become a reasonably predictable procedure in the hands of an experienced practitioner. The better the patient's skin tone or elasticity, the better the result will be. People with very loose skin will usually benefit from an excision of skin such as a tummy tuck. Liposuction is performed through very small 3mm incisions which can usually be hidden easily. Recovery from small volume procedures is short but larger volume procedures can take 3-4 weeks before there is a significant improvement in swelling. On the positive side however, the larger

volume patients notice a much more dramatic shape change and are usually very happy. For women the lower abdomen, hip rolls and outer thighs are common problem areas. For the men it usually is the hip roll (love handles), the front of the abdomen (I call it the 'one pack') and the breasts. Suctioning of any of these areas can create a beautiful change in the shape of ones' body and make wearing that bathing suit a pleasure.

BREAST AUGMENTATION

Historically the most popular of the cosmetic procedures, breast augmentation continues to be a sought after procedure by women from twenty to fifty and even beyond occasionally. I look at it simply as creating a better proportion. The goal for most women is a natural result and the size of the implant ideally should match the base width of the breast. I find that saline implants are very nice for women with a large A cup or larger breasts. Silicone implants have the advantage of a more natural feel and less chance of visibility especially in patients with small breasts and thin skin over their breasts. Regardless of implant type, satisfaction rates are well over 90%.

CELLULITE CORRECTION

Liposuction typically does not correct cellulite – the dimpling of the skin seen over many women's thighs and buttocks. However, a number of non-invasive technologies have been shown to improve cellulite. Perhaps the most well know is Velashape. Velashape uses a combination of radiofrequency and infrared energies to heat the deep skin and adjacent fat to create a compression of the fat and a significant improvement in cellulite and even reduce circumferential measurement around the thigh. Other similar technologies have entered the market as well and promise similar results.

LASER HAIR REMOVAL

For many of us, showing more skin means showing more hair. Both men and women have embraced laser hair removal as a way of permanently reducing the amount of hair present over their backs, legs, arms bikini lines and armpits. Although proponents of waxing and shaving exist, the laser is the only technology that promises the permanent reduction of hair. We find women favor the armpit and bikini line areas the most whereas men are usually looking at removing unwanted hair over the back, shoulders and upper arms. Risks involved are low but treatment requires avoiding sun exposure for a period of time before and after the treatments, which are usually spaced 6 weeks apart.

It will soon be summer with all its activities and fashions usually favor showing more of our figures and more of our skin. For those of us who are looking good and 'beach ready'-congratulations! For those of us wanting a tune up, there are a number of options to help us look our best with minimal to no 'down time'. There is a wealth of information online and a number of excellent practitioners available nearby to assess your unique situation and make recommendations for treatment. As always, check your doctor's credentials, confirm his/her experience and make sure you are comfortable with what they are recommending. Best of luck and have a wonderful summer.

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