



Do  
They  
Work?

WAG Staffers Go  
"Guinea Pig" to Find Out

## Alternative Beauty Treatments

### Mesotherapy

BY JUDITH S. LEDERMAN

I'm lying on a table, belly up, for a treatment, that, if all goes well, will make me a few sizes smaller! No, it isn't liposuction or tummy-tuck surgery. It's an alternative injectable treatment called mesotherapy, begun in France in 1951, now coming to a spa or medical facility near you!

Anyone who has been following my ongoing story, or who "knew me when" knows that I lost a lot of weight—in the general neighborhood of 90 pounds. I lost it through diet and exercise, I work hard to keep it off, and I have written a book, *Joining the Thin Club: Tips for Toning Your Mind AFTER You've Trimmed Your Body*, due to be published by Three Rivers Press this spring.

But alas, what they don't tell you at Curves, Weight Watchers, or the Zone is that all your best efforts will at some point plateau and that fat cells, even when shrunk, remain balled up in some of the most unsightly places, even when you've lost all the weight you can reasonably lose. In my case, several years after my

weight loss, the "pooch" comfortably settled in my belly. Sadly (although fortunately for the world at large), no matter what my weight, I have never worn a bikini and likely never will. Perhaps I can blame my three children, or the bagels I ate as an obese adolescent, or the umpteen pasta dinners followed by chocolate cream pie from Grandma's or chocolate whip dream cake from the RIVERA BAKE SHOP or too many years of being a couch potato. Forty-something years later, even though I'm thin and fit by most standards, those fat cells jiggled when I did jumping jacks, sagged when I did push ups, and squished out between the 200 crunches that I easily executed during my umpteen weekly workouts.

"Cut it out," a plastic surgeon advised. I thought

he meant, stop ruminating on my belly fat and just buy a good girdle. But no, he was actually suggesting a Tummy Tuck, i.e., cutting out a chunk of my belly, restructuring my belly button, stretching my skin taut over my newly flattened stomach. No kickboxing for weeks, and you will need to empty your drains—or find someone else to do it, his nurse told me. Drains? Yes, they'll be hanging out of your belly. You have GOT to be kidding, I said. Eeeuuww! No way! This sounded disgusting, not to mention invasive. *Not for me!*

Which is why I began to investigate alternatives. So I found myself lying on a table at the AMARI CLINIC on Central Park Avenue in Scarsdale, watching a DVD of peaceful waves crashing on a beach as numbing cream made my big old belly, in the immortal words of Pink Floyd, “comfortably numb.”

**Dr. Jyotindra Shah**, a board-certified bariatric physician, was impressed with my weight loss. He did a complete physical nonetheless, including an echocardiogram, and calculated my body mass index, which measured my fat/muscle/water ratio.

He came back with some bad news. My BMI was higher than I had expected. In addition to the spot fat treatment, he said, I needed to diet away another five pounds. No biggie. After losing 90 pounds, the last five pounds can't be that hard. Or can it? He suggested some natural supplements, including L-carnitine, coenzyme Q10, zinc, and selenium, and gave me some basic advice on tweaking my already Spartan diet and brutal exercise regime by eating more frequent meals, higher in protein. This, he said, would inspire my sluggish midlife metabolism to burn calories it was conserving. After the weight loss, my body, he explained, was worried that it was going to starve, so it was stockpiling the calories, a common problem for those who lose weight.



Mesotherapy, he said, is not for people looking to lose weight—but for those who want to melt away stubborn areas. If I did my part, the mesotherapy would do its part.

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“I wouldn't do this treatment on anyone who was looking for the magic weight-loss pill,” he explained. “Mesotherapy is for spot treatment of fat deposits and cellulite. We inject microscopic quantities of natural extracts, homeopathic agents, pharmaceuticals, and vitamins into the skin.” Unlike liposuction, which can cause existing cellulite to appear more prominent, mesotherapy treats cellulite directly, not only killing off the fat cells, but promoting smoother skin. The fat deposits, he explains, are flushed from the body and do not reappear in other areas.

But what sold me was that, unlike liposuction and a tummy tuck, mesotherapy does not require hospitalization, general anesthesia, (drains!), or any post-surgical recovery time. I would be kickboxing again within 48 hours, Dr. Shah promised!

A walk in the park, I thought, as Dr. Shah pinched my numb belly and began the series of injections. There are two types of mesotherapy, he explained, needle and no needle. I had opted for the needle-based treatment, which is said to work faster than the sans needle version. I opted for the quicker fix. The no-needle mesotherapy, called DermaWave, is administered through a process called aquaphoresis, which uses specialized electrical waveforms to reactivate the physiological process in tissue that contributes to the formation of cellulite. It takes a little longer—sometimes eight treatments or more, but it has the additional advantage of tightening the skin as well as eliminating the fat.

I'm tough. Needles don't scare me. So pinch by pinch, Dr. Shah made his way across my lower abdomen. No big deal until later that night and into

the next couple of days. I cannot tell a lie. There was pain and there was swelling. I felt like I had landed belly down on a wasp's nest. And my abdomen turned colors that matched every seasonal outfit in my walk-in closet. Purple, green, blue, yellow, orange—yuck!

But the amazing thing, was, one week later, my belly looked like it had a chunk taken out of it. A huge piece of belly was absolutely—no kidding—gone! And when Dr. Shah measured me before treatment number two, I had lost an inch! One inch—in one week! Wow. OK, not to be overly enthusiastic here, but I have been doing Pilates and ab work for years. I was shocked by the results!

The next week found me back on the table, numbing cream once again being massaged into my now-smaller belly. There was a kind of ridge where the fat had congealed. Dr. Shah said that would go away. He said the medication had collected in the fat cells, hardening them. After the second treatment, the pain wasn't nearly as bad, and the bruising was nominal.

"Are you losing more weight?" one of my colleagues asked me, sizing up my flatter tummy. Two weeks into the treatment, and the jeans I bought on Labor Day were one size too big! My weight on the scale is slowly declining too. And the mirror—that's the best part—showed a visible change! Would the

treatment work if I wasn't watching my food intake and exercising regularly? Maybe not. But I've dieted and exercised before, and the area I'm targeting is indisputably flatter than it was during past diets.

Four weeks later, it was time for a break, Dr. Shah said. The medicine he had been injecting every Friday afternoon will continue to work for weeks, he promised. I believe him. My stomach still felt slightly sore even though it was a week since my last treatment. But it looked smaller. He measured me again. The lowest part of my abdomen was three inches smaller than it was when I first came in. The next week we tried the no-needle treatment. It felt like currents going through my belly but, unlike the needle treatment, there was less belly shrinkage. Perhaps it would reduce the post-baby cellulite?

Am I bikini-worthy? I must say, if I were to keep up the treatments, by the summer, I may be! However, I'll leave the voguing to **Kirstie Alley** and other celebs. I am just thrilled to be feeling better in my yoga pants, and not quite as jiggy when I do my high-impact bouncing. And I like what I see in the mirror. It may not be a six-pack, but it's an almost-flat belly. This alternative treatment has given me an alternative way to look good in my skinny jeans. **WAG**

