Freeze Away That Extra Fat

By Dr. Shim Ching
Interviewed by Guest Writer
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Dr. Shim Ching
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Where did you receive your schooling and training?

I went to McGill University in Montreal and I did my medical school in Vancouver at the University of British Columbia. I did my residency in plastic surgery at McMaster University, also in Canada. I spent some time in San Francisco doing some additional fellowship training. And then I ended up here in Honolulu, and I've been here about five-and-a-half years now.

How long have you been practicing?

About eight years.

What is CoolSculpting?

CoolSculpting is a noninvasive procedure that is intended to reduce fat in areas of the body where people have extra fat. We do a lot of procedures where we try to reshape the body through liposuction or tummy tucks and so

on, but this is something very different. It's quite revolutionary because it doesn't involve any needles or any surgery or cutting, or very much recovery at all. We use a very cold temperature to cause changes in the fat cells so that after the treatment is done, the fat cells generally disappear over a course of two to four months. It takes an hour per area, and after that hourlong treatment the patient does need to wait two to four months or so to see the results, but there's no recovery time. It's essentially just cooling down that area of the body to reduce the fat in that area.

Does the treatment deliver visible results?

Actually we've all tried it - everybody in the office - and even after three or four weeks we already see the results. It's not like liposuction where it's immediate and we're removing all of the fat that we want to remove. With CoolSculpting we experience usually a 20-25 percent reduction in the amount of fat in the area being treated. It's a more mild result, but it's definitely working.

How new is this technology?

It's brand new. It received FDA clearance about two months ago. The machine has been around, but people weren't as excited about it when it didn't have the clearance. Now that it has the clearance, it's been on TV, it's been in various media and I think it's going to be very popular.

Dr. Shim Ching applies the CoolSculpting device to a patient

Who are the best candidates for this treatment?

People who have isolated areas of excess fat. Generally, people who are in fairly good shape, but they just have areas of the body that are resistant to exercise. If somebody has a lot of loose skin in the area, it's probably not going to do much to the skin. It's really only designed to target the fat cells.

Do the fat cells grow back, creating a need for regular follow-up treatments?

People are born with a certain amount of fat cells. They don't reproduce as we get older.

Once those fat cells are gone, people don't tend to reaccumulate the same amount of fat in that area of the body. People often get multiple treatments - as it's only a 20-25 percent reduction of fat per treatment - so people are often getting multiple treatments in the same area to achieve the results that they want.

Could a person potentially remain in a cold place for a certain amount of time to dry up their fat cells?

Unfortunately not. It sounds like if people were cold all of the time it would lead to that. This technology actually came about because they found that children who were eating Popsicles all the time actually had a shrinkage of fat in one of their cheeks because they tended to keep the Popsicle on one side of their mouth. Based on those children, they started to do studies on how we could treat fat with cold to make it go away. This research came out of Harvard, and from those studies they developed the CoolSculpting machine.

What the machine does is it uses a strong suction to pull the skin and fat away from the body. As the skin is isolated from the warmth of the rest of the body, we can cool down the fat to the desired temperature. Otherwise, if the fat is close to the body, it wouldn't really reach the temperature we need it to be.

What temperature does the machine need to reach for it to be effective in drying up fat cells?

Just above 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

Anything else you want to say about the machine?

It's very safe. We're all the first ones to be treated, because obviously if we're going to treat our patients, we want to make sure that it's safe, that it works and that it's not too uncomfortable. It's a very easy way to reduce unwanted fat in the body. And I think this is something that everybody would be interested in, because most people have something that they want to get rid of.

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