



December 2005

ELLEBEAUTYID

SPOTLIGHT ON: VELASMOOTH

In 1998, the Food and Drug Administration approved Endermologie, a suction procedure used to reduce cellulite—that dimply, maddening trapped fat no diet, cream, or exercise regimen has been able to completely conquer. The Endermologie device vacuums skin between two rollers, theoretically stretching and weakening the fibers that pull subcutaneous fat into bumps. Now VelaSmooth, FDA-approved in June 2005, goes beyond Endermologie with the addition of infrared light and radio frequency waves. The manufacturers of VelaSmooth claim that the combination of suction, infrared, and radio waves melts fat cells, releasing the excess fluid into the lymphatic system. However, there's no research yet proving any physiological changes within the fat. Amy Forman Taub, MD, an instructor of clinical dermatology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, speculates that the infrared light and radio waves help the suction actually break down the connective fibers, not just stretch them, eradicating lumps of puckered fat.

The initial tests are promising. Neil Sadick, MD, a clinical professor of dermatology at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University in New York City, coauthored one clinical study in which 35 female patients underwent twice-weekly 30-minute VelaSmooth treatments. Patients who completed an eight-week course saw improved skin texture and reduced thigh circumference by up to two inches. Taub recently participated in



Hot rollers: The VelaSmooth hand piece uses suction and heat to combat cellulite.

a nationwide study of 200 women in which, after four weeks of twice-weekly sessions, they lost up to an inch from each of their thighs.

However, Howard Murad, MD, a clinical professor of dermatology at UCLA and author of *The Cellulite Solution* (St. Martin's Press), urges caution. "Manual lymphatic drainage, a light-touch form of massage, can alleviate puffiness and the look of cellulite temporarily. But if you're sensitive-skinned, a deep-tissue massage action, like that of VelaSmooth, may cause significant bruising," he says. "It can also aggravate varicose and spider veins."

Indeed, an ELLE editor test-drove VelaSmooth and experienced pain, bruising, and no significant cellulite reduction after eight sessions. "It felt as though a giant robot with an incredibly hot hand was pinching and punching me simultaneously," she says. However, her doctor believes she would have seen results after 16 treatments.

While Taub is excited about VelaSmooth's initial results, she notes that its skin-contouring effects are modest and temporary. "It's very likely that after one year without upkeep, the skin would return to its previous state," she says.

"Sometimes you have to extend the treatment to see improvement," Sadick says. At a cost of \$180 per session, two months of twice-weekly VelaSmooth treatments comes to \$2,880, plus monthly follow-ups.

"VelaSmooth is better than any other cellulite treatment I've seen," Taub says, "but we have a lot of research left to do." —MEAGHAN KEELEY