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From Lasers to Balloons: The Skinny on the latest Slim Down Treatments



New treatments and procedures claiming to blast fat and smooth skin enter the market regularly, offering the possibility of a contoured, toned body. Many people who exercise regularly, and watch what they eat find stubborn weight collecting anywhere from the back, arms, abdomen, hips, thighs and derrière. Frustrated, they seek solutions, but which ones deliver and how safe are they? To give us answers, we turned to **Dr. Stanley Poulos**, Board Certified Plastic Surgeon in the San Francisco Bay area and co-founder of Plastic Surgery Specialists who has over 3 decades expertise in body aesthetics.

What is driving women's decisions to try these treatments and how have attitudes changed from a decade ago?

Ten years ago, women would come to my office with photos of celebrities who were working with highly effective fitness trainers. Today both women and men come to my office, show me a random “hot body” in their Instagram feed, looking fabulous in a swimsuit, and want to look like that person. Social media bombards people with images, and they feel if these people aren’t well-known celebrities and look great, then they can too.

What are the most common frustrations when it comes to achieving their desired look?

Well, most people try their best to work out, watch what they eat and try to take care of themselves. They notice, though, that through pregnancies, hormonal and metabolism shifts that happen with age, gravity is winning. Men notice more fat around the waist and “breasts”, women notice cellulite dimples in their thighs and buttocks, bra rolls, extra fat at the waist despite maintaining their diet and exercise routines. A workout routine at 45 will not yield the same results as 35; it becomes frustrating. Collagen production typically falls off a cliff at a certain point in the early 50s; this means treatments need to treat both fat deposits *and* skin tightening.

What do you advise them to do? There are so many treatments to choose from. It can be overwhelming.

Absolutely, and it’s very important to approach any procedure with the facts and a realistic expectation of what’s achievable, and required.. Some women think they just come in for a few hours and they are magically transformed. In some cases, results are immediate, and in other cases healing can take up to 2 to 3 months.

Ok so let’s explore these treatments. What’s the best one out there to deal with cellulite? It seems like most women struggle with cellulite.

Cellulaze

Yes, cellulite is a very common issue women want a solution for, and fast. Cellulaze is a treatment that safely and effectively treats cellulite under local anesthesia with initial results appearing in one to four weeks, with significant results due to thickening collagen by four months. The 2-hour treatment involves an injection of a local anesthetic and wetting solution onto the cellulite, which is then zapped with a laser. This unique side-cutting laser removes the contracted fibrous bands responsible for the cellulite. Finally, the subdermal region is treated for increased collagen production. The result is tight, smooth, supple skin where the cellulite once was. Many women opt to get Cellulaze along with liposuction to address several concerns at once.

Vaser Hi- Def liposculpture

Yes, let's talk about liposuction. How has that treatment changed?

Well, I've seen significant improvements over the years. Now, we have a much more precise method called Vaser Hi-Def LipoSculpture. This method is liposuction, but with techniques and tools that precisely **suction out localized fat deposits** from various parts of the body. This technique is used effectively, for example, in "sculpting" the washboard abs so desired by many. The fat that is harvested can then be used to fill out other areas of the body. The differentiating factor between Vaser Lipo and traditional Liposuction is the preliminary step taken to break down the fat: ultrasound frequencies. The acronym Vaser stands for **V**ibration **A**mplification of **S**ound **E**nergy at **R**esonance.

The vibrations emitted cause expansion and contraction of air bubbles located in tumescent fluid which is ejected from the Vaser Lipo instrument. The procedure is tissue-selective, targeting fat while protecting other tissues from damage. This means eight times less blood loss, easier fat removal, stimulated skin elasticity, less bruising and a tiny incision. Through this process, the fat that is collected is separated to use for fat injections in other areas. The surgeon has the ability to truly sculpt the body.

Balloon Weight Loss Method

What about people who have 20-50 pounds to lose, but not enough weight for gastric bypass surgery?

These patients can be considered for the Balloon Weight Loss Method. An ideal candidate for this procedure has a body mass index of 30 to 40 and did not have previous weight loss surgery. Patients diagnosed with bulimia, binge eating, compulsive overeating, high liquid calorie intake habits or similar eating related psychological disorders are not good candidates.

This non-surgical outpatient procedure begins with a diagnostic endoscopy, to ensure that there are no contraindications and that it is safe to perform. Once the patient is mildly sedated and comfortable, the procedure can begin. The deflated gastric balloon is inserted through the esophagus and into the stomach. A syringe is then used to fill the balloon with a sterile saline solution. Once the weight loss balloon has been filled with saline, it expands to approximately the size of a grapefruit and remains there for 6 months. The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes. Patients can usually return home after the placement or removal procedures within 30 minutes. Over the last 20 years this procedure has helped over 277,000 people. The gastric balloon encourages portion control while patients make healthy changes to diet and lifestyle. After six months the balloon is then removed.

What's key here is to find a doctor who provides the full support and team to address diet and exercise to achieve and maintain optimal results. Dr. Poulos has assembled a team that has achieved some of the best nonsurgical weight loss results in the country.

Regardless of what you choose it's important to do your research by speaking to doctors and understanding the instruments used, the process and what's needed for an optimal recovery and result.

About Dr. Poulos:

Dr. Poulos is a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon and Co-Founder with Yngvar Hvistendahl, M.D of Plastic Surgery Specialists recognized as one of the premier aesthetic surgery clinics in Northern California.

Dr. Poulos helped pioneer the quick lift facial rejuvenation surgery in California and has extensive experience in body contour procedures. With over 30-years' experience in aesthetic procedures, Dr. Poulos has been on the forefront of innovative procedures such as the quick-lift facial rejuvenation, mommy makeover, and vaser lipo-contouring. Dr. Poulos combines his consistent knowledge of new treatment options with his mastery of facial and body symmetry.

His recent focus has been on the gastric balloon, a groundbreaking, non-surgical, medically assisted, outpatient procedure offering weight loss to those seeking to lose between 30 and 75 pounds who may be ineligible for the more invasive gastric bypass surgery. This exciting new procedure allows patients to achieve optimal health and, when combined with exercise and proper nutrition, the results have been exceptional.

A graduate of the University of Texas Medical School, Dr. Poulos completed his internship and residency at UC San Francisco. He completed surgery and plastic surgery training in San Francisco prior to entering private practice in Marin County where he co-founded PSS (www.psspecialists.com)

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