

## GET SMOOTH RESULTS

BACK FAT  
by connie MITCHELL

At a 'certain age,' it seems to happen. Our once svelte torsos shift, sag and settle. And many of us notice something new—an unwelcome roll of fat just above our waistbands or below our bra straps.

"Most people eventually develop a bit of extra fat on the flanks, just above the pelvic bone," says Dr. Terry Myckatyn, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon with Washington University Physicians. "Then there are the rolls on the back. These areas are gaining attention for treatment, and we have some emerging technologies that can help address the problems."

Myckatyn says that various approaches are needed to treat specific causes. Fat deposits can be removed using liposuction or extended tummy tucks. But when the situation is caused by excess skin, particularly common in people who have experienced massive weight loss, surgical removal of the tissue is needed.

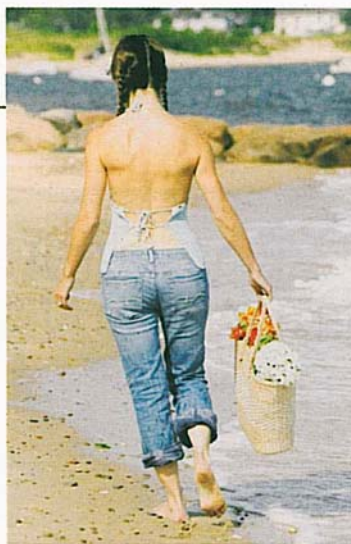
"Skin quality is another determining factor in choosing a procedure," he says. "Younger skin tends to tighten up better, so liposuction is most effective in people who are in their mid-40s or younger. In older patients or those in

whom the skin has expanded and contracted due to weight fluctuations, removing the excess skin is important."

While surgical procedures can address the issue of excess skin that won't disappear on its own, diet and exercise can go a long way in reducing fat deposits all over the body. Although spot reduction is unrealistic, losing fat and increasing overall muscle mass will cause love handles and back rolls to become less noticeable, says Dr. Michele Koo, a plastic surgeon with the Aesthetic Surgery Institute.

"Some people tend to gain weight in these areas, just like someone else gains in the hips and thighs," Koo says. For these stubborn fat deposits, she favors the use of ultrasonic liposuction, which she says works better for love handles and back rolls than conventional liposuction.

"Ultrasonic liposuction is extremely effective for carving a sculpted, smooth and smaller waist and bra-line area," she says. The procedure differs from conventional liposuction because it uses high-pitched sound waves to liquefy fat in a



specific area before the fat is removed. "Thermage and Lipodissolve will not be effective in removing fat for these areas," Koo says. "Once the fat is removed, the fat cells are gone and you won't gain weight there again unless you gain 50 or more pounds."

Liposuction of the waist, abdomen and flank is an outpatient procedure, and patients typically return to work within

two to four days, wearing a compression garment under their clothing for the first two weeks. "The waist will continue to shrink over the next six weeks as the swelling resolves, giving a smooth, sleek profile to someone who may never have had a slim waist," Koo says.

Regardless of the approach you desire, Dr. Judith Gurley, a plastic surgeon in private practice in Chesterfield, says patients always should seek the opinion of a board-certified plastic surgeon. She also advises patients to beware of unproven technologies or procedures that promise a quick fix with no pain or downtime. Gurley agrees that liposuction remains the "gold standard when it comes to fat removal. In the hands of board-certified plastic surgeons, it is predictable, reliable and effective."

