

WSJ

Why Stomach Tightening Is a New Skin-Care Trend

When it comes to skin care, we've turned our attention below the neck.

Fiorella Valdesolo | April 5, 2022



The "Miu Miu set," a scant crop top and ultra-low-rise pleated mini that was part of the brand's spring/summer 2022 collection, has now been photographed and knocked off so many times that it has its own Instagram account (@miumiuset). While the look is a paragon of the Y2K frenzy besieging fashion, its popularity and that of other midriff-baring runway styles (see the low-slung pants at Vaquera, Balmain, Tom Ford, Lanvin, Brandon Maxwell and Marni, among others) are also helping drive a surge in interest for body treatments. "Given that the most recent Fashion Weeks displayed that exposed midriffs and micro-minis are back, there has definitely been an increase in requests for body-contouring methods," says Shirley Madhère, plastic surgeon and founder of Jet Set Beauty Rx, adding that the most requested procedures in her Manhattan practice have been tummy tucks and liposuction of the abdomen and thighs.



The look known as the “Miu Miu set,” from the brand’s spring/summer 2022 collection.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MIU MIU

In January, comedian Amy Schumer revealed on her Instagram that she’d had liposuction, explaining to Chelsea Handler in an interview in March: “I just want to be real about it.” Laura Dyer, a physician assistant who treats patients at dermatologist Amy Wechsler’s practice, says celebrity transparency helps set more realistic expectations for everyone. “Honesty around how they achieve their bodies is important,” says Dyer. “Not everyone looks 22 using just olive oil.”

Paul Jarrod Frank, a cosmetic dermatologist in Manhattan, thinks one factor driving more people to explore body treatments is that there are significantly more options and advances than there were even a few years ago. For crepiness and skin tightening, Frank has been deploying body-specific radio-frequency microneedling handpieces, which use tiny needles to deliver high-intensity radio-frequency energy to targeted tissue; for superficial sun damage, he turns to BroadBand Light Hero light therapy. (Still, for severe laxity or to significantly change body shape, he steers people away from noninvasive treatments towards a surgical intervention like tumescent liposuction.)

Dyer’s gold standard for body contouring remains CoolSculpting, despite the negative press around it after model Linda Evangelista experienced paradoxical adipose hyperplasia (PAH), a rare, but not unknown, side effect in which the fat increases instead of diminishing. According to Allergan Aesthetics, the brand behind CoolSculpting, the reaction occurs in 1 out of 3,000 treatments. Frank says he’s used liposuction to fix many cases of PAH and that patients should always be aware of potential side effects. “Complications can occur with noninvasive as well as invasive too,” he says.



Midriff style at Brandon Maxwell 's spring-summer '22 offerings.

PHOTO: GREG KESSLER, COURTESY OF BRANDON MAXWELL

At L.A.'s popular Le Jolie Medi Spa, Emsculpt Neo, a noninvasive toning procedure using radio frequency and high-intensity electromagnetic energies, is the most requested treatment, and the abs the most requested area for it. Dennis Gross, a New York-based dermatologist says that appointments in his office for SculpSure, a laser for contouring, have been off the charts. Younger women, in particular, are asking to "snatch their waistline" to make their hips look more pronounced, says Gross's director of aesthetics, Courtney Brooks, citing the curvature of women like Adele, Beyoncé and the Kardashians as the driving force.

New York dermatologist Ellen Marmur has been using **Renuva**, a new injectable treatment that helps address cellulite dimples, by replacing fat and volume loss with your body's own fat. On Instagram, dermatologist Robert Anolik recently posted a photo showcasing the results of laser therapy on a patient's post-pregnancy midriff stretch marks (pink striae rubra). He says the photo was taken after three sessions, one month apart, using a pulsed dye laser, which diminishes the pink hue and tightens collagen fibers.

And dermatologist Macrene Alexiades just participated in clinical trials about the reduction of abdominal girth with NuEra, a device that uses three different radio frequencies to treat various tissue depths. (Her study homed in on the optimal intradermal temperature for tightening.) "The body has become as important an asset as the face was in the past," says Alexiades.



A belly-baring look from Lanvin's spring/summer '22 line.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LANVIN

At Joanna Vargas's popular midtown salon, clients are now booking her signature facials with a 60-minute session in the full-body oxygen chamber, which, says Vargas, increases circulation and collagen production and reduces stress, inflammation and redness. "People really see the value of caring for the whole body since the world reopened," she adds. Facialist Shamara Bondaroff of SB Skin, which has locations in New York and Miami, can couple her microcurrent facials with microcurrent bodywork, applying quantum body pads to stimulate muscle contractions that mimic those of sit-ups.

Ricari Studios founder Anna Zahn, a lymphatic massage expert, has seen a dramatic uptick in bookings for the Ricari Method, her custom body treatment with infrared heat, manual massage, Lyma laser stimulation and the Icoone, a vacuum massage device that uses rollers and rhythmic vibrations to enhance lymphatic flow, reduce cellular deposits and stimulate collagen and elastin.

Stimulating collagen and elastin is something we usually look for in our facial skin-care products, and it's no accident that it's now a priority for the body as well. "We know that body skin care isn't an afterthought, because we can see the large volume of people in the U.S. alone searching body skin-specific terminology on Google," says Annie Kreighbaum, co-founder of Soft Services, a body-care brand. And more face-focused brands are broadening their scope to body. Kreighbaum says that the rise of athleisure has helped fuel our evolving body skin-care needs too; wearing tight, synthetic clothes throughout the day from exercising to Zooming is leading to an increase in issues like body acne. Says Zahn, "If our skin is our biggest organ, why would we only treat part of it?"

Body of Evidence

Products for soothing and smoothing stomach skin:



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALASTIN

Alastin TransForm Body Treatment

A favorite at Le Jolie Medi Spa and of Dyer, who recommend it for after in-office body treatments, this peptide-based serum aims to hydrate and keep skin looking taut. \$205



PHOTO: COURTESY OF TATA HARPER SKINCARE

Tata Harper Resurfacing Body Serum

A quickly absorbing serum that brightens with Vitamin C, smooths with plant-derived Vitamin A and moisturizes with hyaluronic acid. *Available in May; \$155*



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ENVIRON SKINCARE

Environ Body EssentiA Vitamin A, C and E Body Oil

An antioxidant-rich oil is ideal for dry and sun-damaged skin, particularly on the décolletage, legs, hands and feet. \$72



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MUTHA

Mutha Body Contour Serum

A hydrating (with hyaluronic acid, squalane and ceramides), resurfacing (with AHAs) and contouring (with caffeine) serum, which can mix with the brand's body butter for further moisturizing. \$95



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SOFT SERVICES

Soft Services Buffing Bar

A body bar that both exfoliates with microcrystals and moisturizes. *\$28 for two*



PHOTO: COURTESY DRUNK ELEPHANT

Drunk Elephant T.L.C. Glycolic Body Lotion

The brand's glycolic formula transformed into a lotion for the body. *\$25*



PHOTO: KATE SOMERVILLE

Kate Somerville ExfoliKate Resurfacing Body Scrub

Somerville's exfoliant for the face formulated for the body to buff away rough skin. \$56



PHOTO: COURTESY OF PEACH & LILY

Peach & Lily KP Bump Boss Microderm Body Scrub

The combined benefits of a chemical peel and microdermabrasion in a hydrating base of hyaluronic acid and squalane. \$28

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