

{ BEAUTY }



Photographs by KATIE FALKENBERG For The Times

OFFICE: Dr. W. Grant Stevens of Marina Plastic Surgery Associates uses a Zeltiq machine, right, to zap fat. The device freezes fat cells, which the body later expels.

NO KNIFE NEEDED

Many cosmetic treatments performed today are surgery-free. The options are growing.

SUSAN CARPENTER

Dr. W. Grant Stevens calls it his fire and ice room. Stocked with lasers, skin-tightening devices, fat-zapping machines and, on a recent Wednesday, a 65-year-old woman named Helen, the brightly lit corner of the Marina del Rey medical facility is a smorgasbord of the latest nonsurgical cosmetic procedures.

In one corner, there's an Exilis electronic wand not much bigger than a pen, plugged in and ready to roll over Helen's face, tightening her skin. Two boxy Zeltiq machines, which are used as a nonsurgical alternative to liposuction, sit in another corner. The room also holds the newest version of the radio-frequency skin tightener Thermage, a Xeo hair removal device, the Zerona laser, which is supposed to get rid of fat, and a Fraxel — a so-called fractionated laser used to resurface and smooth the skin.

"When I was younger, my husband called me *yafah*. He said I was beautiful," said Helen, an Israeli socialite who'd flown to L.A. from Miami the day before to embellish a surgical body lift she had received from Stevens, a cosmetic plastic surgeon, three months earlier. "For many, many years, he forgot to call me *yafah*.... Now he asks, 'Do you have a boyfriend? You look so good it doesn't make sense anymore.' "

Helen, who asked that her last name not be used for privacy reasons, was having this conversation while the Zeltiq machines were attached to her legs and her cheeks were coated with numbing gel in anticipation of Exilis and Fraxel treatments. A book was propped open in her lap. Her iPhone was at the ready. Smiling as much as one can when one's face is losing all sensation, Helen is evidence of a major trend: the growth of nonsurgical cosmetic devices and treatments.

Eighty-three percent of all cosmetic procedures performed in the offices of cosmetic plastic surgeons in 2010 were nonsurgical, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. The American Society of Cosmetic Dermatology and Aesthetic Surgery reports a similar trend. What does that mean in terms of volume? Almost 8 million nonsurgical cosmetic procedures were performed last year at a cost of \$4.1 billion.

"There's a huge demand for nonsurgical procedures," said Dr. Jeffrey Kenkel, a cosmetic plastic surgeon in Dallas.

The reasons are simple, said Kenkel, who is president of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. "Some patients only want a little bit of change," he said. Others "just aren't interested in a surgical option." They're seeking procedures that are less expensive, less painful and less disruptive than, say, a face-lift, which costs an average of \$6,600 and takes weeks of recovery time.

FDA approvals

In the last year alone, the Food and Drug Administration has approved two new devices — Zerona and Zeltiq — used for the nonsurgical removal of fat. The latter is quickly gaining favor as a surgery-free alternative to liposuction.

Zeltiq is a device that vacuum-attaches to the body and delivers precise and controlled cooling through the skin to target subcutaneous fat deposits. The one-hour treatment is designed to freeze and kill fat cells without damage to the skin or internal organs. If the treatment is successful, over the course of several weeks, the fat cells are broken down and processed by the liver, and ultimately expelled as excrement.

"The typical candidate needs one to two

Devices that tighten, smooth, shape and slim

Doctors' offices are full of brochures listing new nonsurgical procedures that promise to tighten skin, eliminate redness or brown spots and get rid of fat. Though the machines have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the clearances don't encompass all the cosmetic procedures that are popping up in doctors' offices; physicians can use approved products for off-label procedures. What follows is a sampling of some of those devices and cosmetic procedures that are associated with them.

ZELTIQ

What it is: A device that contains a freezing unit that is used to freeze and kill fat cells without damage to the skin or internal organs. The procedure is known as CoolSculpting.
Who makes it: Zeltiq, in Pleasanton, Calif.
FDA-approved: 2010
Length of treatment: One hour
Downtime: None
Cost: \$700 to \$1,500 per treatment

EXILIS

What it is: A device that uses radio frequency waves to stimulate and strengthen the skin's collagen. The goal of the procedure is to tighten skin, shape body contours and smooth wrinkles.
Who makes it: BTL Aesthetics, in Prague, Czech Republic
FDA-approved: 2009
Length of treatment: About 20 minutes
Downtime: None, though redness and swelling may last a few hours after treatment
Cost: \$400 to \$600 per treatment

EXCEL V LASER

What it is: A laser used to target the red in blood vessels, heating them to the point of collapse and disappearance
Who makes it: Cutera, in Brisbane, Calif.
FDA-approved: 2010
Length of treatment: 15 minutes
Downtime: None
Cost: \$1,000 or less

FRAXEL LASER

What it is: A laser used to treat a portion of the skin without affecting surrounding tissues. It's used to stimulate collagen production, diminish fine lines and age

spots, and resurface skin.

Who makes it: Solta Medical, in Hayward, Calif.
FDA-approved: 2004
Length of treatment: 80 minutes (60 minutes to numb the skin, 20 to 30 minutes for laser treatment)
Downtime: Two or three days
Cost: \$750 to \$1,000 per treatment

PEARL LASER

What it is: A laser used to resurface and tighten skin and reduce wrinkles and sun spots
Who makes it: Cutera, in Brisbane, Calif.
FDA-approved: 2007
Length of treatment: 45 minutes
Downtime: Five days
Cost: \$2,500 to \$4,000

THERMAGE

What it is: A radio frequency device designed to smooth the skin and soften wrinkles. It heats the deepest layers of skin to help tighten existing collagen and stimulate collagen renewal.
Who makes it: Solta Medical, in Hayward, Calif.
FDA-approved: 2002
Length of treatment: 20 minutes to two hours, depending on location of treatment
Downtime: None
Cost: \$1,000 to \$5,000

ZERONA

What it is: A low-level laser scanner used to emulsify and remove fat nonsurgically
Who makes it: Erchonia, in McKinney, Texas
FDA-approved: 2010
Length of treatment: 40 minutes
Downtime: None
Cost: \$1,700 to \$2,500 for six sessions

— SUSAN CARPENTER



CHILLING OUT: A device that freezes and kills fat cells, used on a patient at Marina Plastic Surgery in Marina del Rey, is an alternative to liposuction.

exposures on an average love handle," said Dr. Dieter Manstein, co-inventor of Zeltiq with Dr. Rox Anderson. (Both of them work with the Wellman Center for Photomedicine at Massachusetts General Hospital in

Boston, a teaching affiliate of the Harvard Medical School.)

"The ideal candidate is somebody who's in reasonably good shape, somebody who has some love handles or a post-pregnancy

pouch or back fat that doesn't want to disappear," said Manstein, who also co-developed, with Anderson, a fractional laser skin resurfacing technique popularized by a device known as Fraxel.

FDA spokeswoman Erica Jefferson said the agency does not track the rate of applications for medical devices. But she added that the agency has cleared "tons" of devices for skin tightening, body contouring and wrinkle reduction in the last decade.

The number of FDA-approved skin-tightening devices, in particular, has dramatically increased in recent years, including products such as Exilis and Pearl.

The Exilis device uses radio frequency waves in an attempt to stimulate and strengthen collagen (and to reduce fat). About 100 Exilis devices are in use in the U.S., including in Stevens' fire and ice room.

Comprehensive in options

"We try to be very comprehensive," said Stevens, a board-certified cosmetic plastic surgeon who practices at Marina Plastic Surgery Associates in Marina del Rey and also runs the aesthetic plastic surgery fellowship at USC.

Dr. Sanjay Grover, a cosmetic surgeon with practices in Newport Beach and Beverly Hills, says patients want options.

"The interesting thing these days is [that] if you watch TV or look in magazines, the drug companies are bypassing doctors and going straight to the consumer," Grover said. "They're creating a lot of awareness of their products among consumers."

"I offer a number of different products and services in my practice. Today's cosmetic surgeon or medical provider needs to be able to offer a full-service shop to the patient... [and] you want to tell them what to expect with any of these modalities because for some patients it won't be worth paying the money for some things until they go through certain [other] procedures."

Kenkel says some of the devices can be unpredictable. "That's the frustration many clinicians like myself have. It's great to have a device that tightens skin, but can it do so [again and again]? Can it tighten skin or remove fat consistently and reliably? If a device tightens skin only 20% but does so 90% of the time, a patient can relate to it. A patient can't relate to a device that in some people gives good results and in others doesn't because you don't know which group you'll fall into."

Many cosmetic plastic surgeons test devices on themselves or offer new procedures to their patients free or at a reduced cost.

Kathy Weatherwax, a 48-year-old mother of four wanted her skin "to look brighter and younger and fresher," without surgery. "I wanted maximum results with minimum down time because I have two little ones," she said. "I want to save surgery for when I really need it, when I'm 70 or something," said Weatherwax, who paid \$1,500 for an ultrasound face tightening treatment and was compensated the CO2 fractionated laser therapy by her doctor.

Weatherwax was hoping to reduce the ever-deepening groove in her forehead and the sun damage on her lower face from when she worked as a lifeguard as a teenager and used her breaks to lie in the sun and deepen her tan. Presented with a menu of options including microdermabrasion, fillers and a brow lift, Weatherwax chose ultrasound therapy to lift and smooth her brow, and a fractionated laser to deal with the sun damage.

Weatherwax says she got the results she wanted.

"I think I could pass for 40," she said.

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