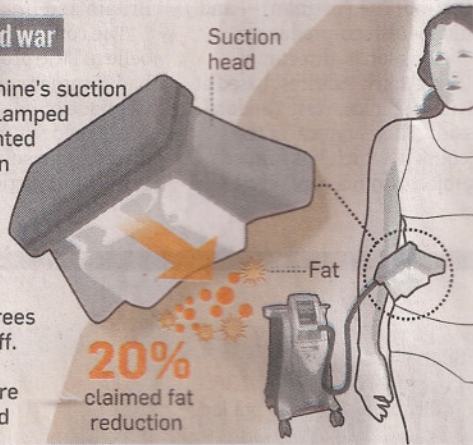


The new cold war

1 The machine's suction head is clamped on unwanted flab for an hour

2 Fat cells freeze at zero degrees and die off. Skin and muscle are unharmed



Freeze, tubby: the new way to slim

Maurice Chittenden

A NEW "fat-zapping" machine is allowing out-of-shape people to have their love handles or paunches frozen away.

The painless alternative to liposuction involves freezing fat cells so they die off. The first £80,000 machine has arrived in Britain and begun taking its first customers.

Liposuction has overtaken breast augmentation as the top plastic surgery procedure, but the zapper could replace it in many cases. Treatment costs about £800, a quarter of the price of "lipo", and patients can walk away after an hour's treatment feeling nothing but numbness to the treated area.

The "cool sculpting" device was designed by researchers at Zeltiq, a firm in California, after scientists noticed that children who sucked a lot of iced lollies developed concave depressions in their cheeks.

They realised that while fat cells freeze at lower temperatures than other tissue, skin cells can survive colder temper-

atures. The skin and muscles suffer no lasting damage.

A pad from the machine is clamped to the target part for an hour and freezes it solid. The body's metabolism flushes away the dead fat cells over the next six weeks.

The Zeltiq, which is designed for people in need of a little fat removal rather than to treat obesity, has just been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration along with another device, the Zerona. This looks like a mechanical spider and fires a low-level laser around the waist and thighs, searing away fat cells.

The first Zeltiq device in the UK is at the Beyond MediSpa clinic at Harvey Nichols in central London.

Debbie Scott, 60, an American living in London, went to Paris for treatment on a Zeltiq to remove a bulge around her belly button. "It's uncomfortable but not painful," she said.

"For the next couple of days you touch the area and it is numb, but after a month the [bulge] had shrunk."