The Truth About Cellulite

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How many times have you seen ads for "magic potions" that claim to "melt away" cellulite? Dating back to the 19th century, unscrupulous hucksters have made a fortune by hawking these miracle products. Creams, lotions, ointments…just rub them on and watch your dimpled skin disappear. Sounds too good to be true? Well, it is!

The truth is, cellulite is a genetic condition that can't be purged by magic potions. You see, cellulite tends to be hereditary; if your mother and siblings are afflicted, the chances are good that you will be too. Like your height, eye color and hair texture, genetics dictate where fat is deposited and the semblance that it takes on your body. Hence, while some women can be obese with little evidence of cellulite, others can be relatively thin and have cottage cheese thighs. This is simply the luck of the draw. If you picked good parents, you might escape the big "C". If not…

Interestingly, men rarely develop cellulite. This is due to the composition of human skin. The skin and its underlying tissue have three fundamental layers: The top layer is comprised of a cellular-based tissue called the dermis. Its primary purpose is to protect your body from outside contaminants. The middle layer is made up of fibrous connective tissue called superficial fascia. It is substantially thicker than the dermis and acts like an internal stocking to support the skin. The lower layer is made up of adipose tissue-plain old fat. It has several functions including insulating the body, padding the internal organs and providing a source of long-term energy.

You're probably wondering how all this physiology applies to cellulite. Well, the superficial fascia is responsible for holding bodyfat in place. In men, the superficial fascia is arranged in a crisscross pattern that is strong and consistent. Accordingly, fat is contained in a uniform manner subcutaneously (below the skin), leaving the skin surface smooth and supple. In women, however, the superficial fascia tends to be irregular and discontinuous. It has a vertical distribution, forming honeycomb-like patterns beneath the dermis. Hence, when fat accumulates, it pushes up towards the skin's surface in clusters, giving the skin the lumpy, dimpled appearance commonly known as cellulite.

Cellulite is further exacerbated by the localized accumulation of lymphatic fluid. Research has shown that cellulite contains an abundance of glycosaminoglycans-a polysaccharide-based compound that has high water-attracting properties. Glycosaminoglycans draw fluid into fatty tissue, causing extensive swelling in cellulite-affected areas. This heightens the density of cellulite, making it heavy and voluminous.

Given that cellulite is related to the structural composition of connective tissue, it's easy to see why it's impossible for a cream to eradicate the problem; there simply is no way that an externally applied solution can penetrate the skin and "reconfigure" the underlying connective tissue. For all intensive purposes, anything short of radical surgery simply has no lasting effect on the condition.

But just because you may be predisposed to cellulite doesn't mean you have to succumb to its effects. A combination of proper nutrition and regimented exercise is the only viable way to counteract the problem. By reducing bodyfat and adding muscle tone, you can substantially reduce, if not completely eliminate, this unsightly malady. Once bodyfat is reduced to acceptable levels, the muscle will be more apparent, making cellulite less evident.

In final analysis, you can't get rid of cellulite with magic formulas. Only through a regimented program of exercise and diet can you diminish its appearance.