

important “girdle” of muscles that support and surround the back and abdomen.

Remember, it took your body a long time to develop its armor. It takes a while to remove it. Getting through the armor takes a variety of modalities, like balneotherapy, meditation, yoga, and self-massage. But simple awareness, too, is key. This ritual of body awareness should be repeated frequently to remind you of any negative postural habits that are contributing to armoring. By regularly removing your armor, you will find that you are standing and moving with greater ease and confidence, and that your heart chakra is fully open to the energies of the season.

BODY CONTOURING MASSAGE

Summer is a natural weight-loss season because it is our period of peak activity. We are designed to carry less weight in the summertime and add weight in the winter. Our bodies are naturally slimmed and toned from the activity of summer.

However, when we confront the prospect of putting on a swimsuit, many of us would like to feel a bit firmer or have our body contours smoother. Our lifestyle is typically more sedentary than that of our ancestors. Even if you work out, if you spend a great deal of your life seated in front of a computer, your lymphatic and blood circulation is affected. Your body can be reshaped by habitual armoring, but it's also reshaped by inadequate circulation. Processed foods, synthetic hormonal additives in meat and dairy products, and foods containing toxic residue from chemical pesticides all contribute greatly to the figure imbalance we call cellulite.

Many women mistakenly think they have cellulite, because another condition common to the upper legs, “deep-tissue dehydration,” looks similar to the untrained eye. To tell if the uneven texture you’re observing is cellulite, firmly run your fingertips from the inside of the knee upward, stroking across the thigh toward the groin. This follows the lymph channels in the upper legs. You can actually *feel* cellulite, which often forms hard adhesions and nodules under the skin.

Deep-tissue dehydration causes the orange-peel texture on the backs of the thighs. It will usually display a horizontal pattern, and if you lift the skin slightly upward, the uneven texture will disappear. (Not so with cellulite.) The skin sags for two reasons: one, because the muscle underneath has shrunk (atrophied from lack of nourishment), and two, because the skin lacks water in the connective tissues. This is due to a lack of mineral salts, which attract and bind water in the skin. Replacing these vital mineral salts through sea mineral baths (such as the detoxifying balneotherapy ritual described on page 35,) or sea mineral wraps and internal supplements can bring about a quick and gratifying improvement in this condition. Then exercise and massage can tone the underlying muscle.

Fortunately, cellulite responds to a program of detoxification, stimulated both internally and externally, as well as a combination of specialized and precise deep tissue and lymphatic massage to break up adhesions and drain stagnant fluids. Massage therapist Charles W. Wiltsie III, LMT, NCTMB, conducted an unprecedented year-long study proving that specific deep tissue massage, which he calls *Lypossage*, can help healthy women reduce body dimensions without losing weight. A body-contouring massage helps move toxins out of the targeted areas of the body through lymphatic drainage. Increased circulation nourishes and improves muscle tone. The thighs, buttocks, and lower stomach are particularly apt to respond because they contain a great deal of fatty tissue, lymphatic vessels, and visceral organs that eliminate waste. They also contain some of the largest muscles in the body.

The best result is achieved when self-massage is used as maintenance after

you've been treated by a therapist who uses one of these techniques. It's difficult to perform an effective self-massage on the back of the leg or buttocks; it's not possible to achieve all the leverage needed to work the less accessible areas. But you can still benefit from a self-administered program of massage strokes and manipulations.

By increasing the health of the muscles and lymph, you receive a wonderful aesthetic benefit, that of smoothing and contouring. But body-contouring massage also supports nature's detoxifying work and its nurturing effects enhance Body-Mind balance. And in keeping with our summertime instinct to bare our bodies and enjoy the sunshine, this ritual helps us feel better about ourselves when we put on a swimsuit.

There are six basic massage strokes, and each varies in depth depending on the area worked and the result desired. This self-massage ritual itself takes about twenty minutes. For the fastest results, do three treatments a week for six weeks.

Caution: Do not perform this ritual if you have any varicose veins, blood clots, or are pregnant.

- Begin by establishing a positive intention for the treatment. This is not about fixing a "bad" body. Use this affirmation: I love my body and I'm taking good care of it.
- Blend an ounce of jojoba oil with 2 drops each of grapefruit, clary sage, and fennel essential oils. Clary sage is a euphoric with benefits for the reproductive system; cellulite is aggravated by hormonal imbalance. Clary sage stimulates creativity and releases inhibition; however, it should not be used before driving or activities requiring mental focus. Fennel is often used by aromatherapists in the treatment of PMS. Grapefruit is cleansing and detoxifying with mild diuretic properties. Warm the oil in the glass beaker of an electric coffeemaker or use a baby-bottle warmer.
- Take a shower to warm and prepare the skin.

- Dry off.
- *Effleurage: Caution.* Be sure to test the temperature of the oil before dispensing it! This is a long, sweeping stroke of the entire open hand that's used to stimulate circulation and lymphatic drainage. It's also relaxing and calming. Effleurage is performed with a light application of oil. Beginning at the ankles, slide your hands upward, hand over hand, toward the lymph nodes behind your knees. Then move up the thigh, sweeping hand over hand toward the groin area, also the site of lymph nodes. *Always* massage toward the heart. Spend one minute on each leg.
- *Petrissage.* This stroke is shorter than effleurage and is done with fingers, palms, and thumbs. Its strokes are similar to effleurage strokes except they are more narrow and smaller. Because when massaging yourself your hands are essentially backward compared to those of someone else working on your body, you can perform a variation on this technique by making loose fists and using the flat surfaces between your knuckles to perform the strokes. Strokes can be used to focus on target areas. After working each leg for about a minute, you should begin to see some reddening of the skin as circulation is stimulated. At this point, a good deal of the jojoba oil should have absorbed into the skin. If there is excess, wipe it off with a towel. You'll need some "grip" for the next phase.
- *Skin rolling.* This is the lifting of the skin in bunches between fingers and thumbs and then rolling the skin. It is a difficult technique. However, it's effective in breaking up adhesions, softening fascia, improving muscle tone, and stimulating circulation. It is a vigorous technique that requires some skill to prevent discomfort and bruising. Begin very gently. Use both hands to work the front and sides of the thighs and even the soft, loose tissue of the lower belly. Be very careful when working on your abdomen. Lie on your side to massage the buttocks with one hand and roll onto your back to reach the backs of the thighs, again using both hands. The lifting of the skin is important because you're attempting to loosen adhesions. You will build up a toler-

ance for any discomfort as tissue becomes healthier and more flexible and circulation is enhanced. Even if you have a tendency to form small bruises at first, if you persist with the treatments your skin will become more resilient and these will not continue to occur. Spend three minutes working each side of your lower body.

- *Tapotement*. This is the “chopping” technique you see in the movies when the boxer is on the table getting a massage. The key to this technique is endurance. It needs to be done in the target areas for two to three minutes, which is harder than it sounds. Do not use this technique on your stomach or lower back, where you could injure the kidneys. To treat the back of the legs, sit in a chair and rest your foot against the edge of a desk or tabletop.
- *Deep kneading*. Now we can begin to slow down. The stimulating phase of the treatment is over. Apply a small amount of the warm oil. Deep kneading is a relatively easy stroke that involves gathering skin in the palms of the hands and kneading it like bread dough. It is good for circulation and muscle tone. Spend about two minutes on each leg.
- *Compression*. This is a wonderful technique that can help ease edema. It is simply compressing a target area with open hands for about a minute. Follow with light effleurage toward the lymph nodes on the backs of the legs and the groin, and it will help to drain the lymphatic system. Spend about two minutes on each side of the body.
- When you’ve finished the massage, take another shower and thoroughly cleanse all the oil from your skin. Soak in a warm, detoxifying seaweed bath (see spring’s Detoxifying Seaweed Bath). This will help complete the lymphatic cleansing process.
- Over the next twenty-four hours, drink lots of water to help flush waste out of your system. Dislodged lymphatic waste ends up in the circulatory system, where it is filtered out by the kidneys. Adequate hydration is essential to this process. Drink small amounts of room-temperature or warm fluid frequently rather than taking large glasses of water.

Congratulations! You've completed a sophisticated spa treatment that will yield gratifying results when repeated in a series of twenty, three times per week.

SUMMER TEA-TIME RITUAL

With the summer's increase in fire energy, heat increases in our bodies. However, our digestive fires are not strong at this time of year. When people remark that the heat "kills their appetite," they are sensing weaker digestive energy. Cool foods and beverages seem more appetizing. A hot summer day and an ice-cold drink with your meal: What could be better?

Wait! Those weak digestive fires will be extinguished altogether by that iced tea or ice water. Cooling your body is a question of balancing outer and inner heat. Taking warm showers and even drinking hot liquids will help you sweat, which can cool the body by equalizing the temperature inside and outside. Cold food and beverages can cause sudden contraction and tightening, preventing heat from dispersing from the body or even bringing digestion to an abrupt halt. Water is best consumed at room temperature or warmer, and one of the best sources of water in your diet is fruits and vegetables, preferably those that are organically grown.

Water consumption should increase during the summer. Though most of us have been raised on the standard of "eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day," the best way to drink water is in small amounts, about three or four ounces at a time. This is particularly true with meals, when it's important to keep your digestive enzymes at full strength. In Chinese medicine, excessive water consumption is believed to increase yin energy, making us feel cold and even weak. If you've