

In search of the perfect bottom

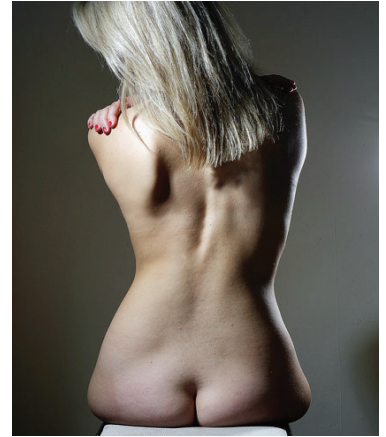
Alice Morley

08.07.09 My backside has been a source of distress to me for my whole post-adolescent life.

I've put a lot of effort into rectifying its disproportionately large size and as a competitive City girl have battled with a string of unbearable diets.

Over the past six years I've attempted Atkins, low GI, low calorie (well, starvation really), the cabbage soup diet and even Beyoncé's maple syrup concoction.

I've tried personal trainers, yoga, Pilates, power plates and Brazilian boot camps, yet I still look dreadful in jeans. So when I recently heard whispers around the City about a new form of "lunchtime lipo", my ears pricked up.



Rumour had it that the newest form of fat removal caused only minimal bruising and downtime - so virtually no time off work - and was taking London by storm. After five minutes on Google I'd located Dr Ayoubi, the man credited with introducing the treatment to the UK, and had booked myself a consultation session at the London Medical and Aesthetic Clinic in Harley Street.

Dr Ayoubi, a charming and softly spoken Syrian, first explained the philosophy of his clinic, which is that any surgery is aimed at "enhancing" rather than "altering" looks. I had been hoping for more shrinkage than "enhancement". The treatment can be applied to any part of the body though the most popular areas are post-natal tummies, saddlebags, double chins and bingo wings.

Not surprisingly, 80 per cent of Dr Ayoubi's clients are women but he noted, "We do get men. Most of them are looking to remove 'man breasts'!" I don't blame them. The treatment is not a cure for obesity. It's designed for patients with areas of "stubborn fat".

After granting that the fat around my rear was suitably stubborn, I contemplated an appointment the following week, which would make me "bikini-ready" three weeks after that. With a holiday to Europe looming and a beach full of sun-kissed supermodels on my mind, I handed over my credit card.

On my way to the treatment, my optimism faded and I was instead questioning my own sanity. Fortunately my fears were allayed on arrival at the fantastically chic Hurlingham Clinic (and spa, incidentally) in Parsons Green. The atmosphere was calming - it felt like I was just swinging by for a facial - and the staff couldn't have been more friendly.

As the appointment loomed, however, the luxurious surroundings weren't enough to appease my fears - in my nervous state I embarrassingly put on my surgical gown backwards and forgot my operating knickers. A couple of Valiums later, and with two motherly nurses holding each hand, I found myself on the operating table.

After the application of local anaesthetic, it was time for the laser treatment, an odd sensation to say the least. Having made a very small incision, the surgeon inserted a two-millimetre-wide laser under the skin, and melted the fat cells that had been causing me so much distress. Ice packs were applied after each zap to ensure that the skin wasn't burnt.

The first version of SmartLipo would leave it at that, but this new generation treatment (SmartLipo MPX) uses a little suction to remove some of the fat there and then, so that a partial result may be seen immediately and the end result is more effective.

"I have found that patients are anything but patient," Dr Ayoubi joked. I knew that my surgeon and I were on the same wavelength.

When I gently sat up, trying not to look too carefully at my mangled body, I noticed the sponge-like texture of my thighs before I was quickly manoeuvred into the garment I was to wear for the next 10 days.

These were like a slightly tighter, nude pair of Bridget Jones style "magic knickers", with a strategically placed hole.

Although the bruising is dramatic, the procedure and recovery period has been uncomfortable rather than painful.

What's more concerning is that two weeks later my backside is still more Kerry Katona than the Carla Bruni bottom I had envisaged.

Reassuringly, Gillie Turner, the helpful managing director of the Hurlingham Clinic, reminded me that "the treatment was not a miracle cure, that I should continue to eat sensibly and take exercise and that the full effects would become apparent in "about three months' time".

Providing my thighs no longer "kiss" and I'm happily wearing my skinny jeans by October, that's enough of a miracle for me.

London Medical & Aesthetic Clinic 020 8342 1100, www.lmaclinic.com/ Prices start from £2,200.