



# Non-Invasive ARM SLIMMING Treatments

IF THE IDEA OF EXPOSING YOUR BICEPS AND TRICEPS FILLS YOU WITH DISMAY, PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO CONSIDER TRANSFORMING THOSE FLABBY ARMS INTO SHAPELIER ONES. **O.P. JADE** LOOKS FOR OPTIONS – WITHOUT GOING UNDER THE KNIFE.



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**F**or many people, getting rid of excess fat is a lifelong battle. Abdominal fat, stubborn love handles or muffin tops – these are some of our least favourite regional fat stores. And the arms, of course!

“Generally, arms are a problem area, mainly with women. It is indeed a tricky area,” says aesthetic medical practitioner, Dr. Shaun Lim Ting Song.

As we age, reduced elasticity in the skin and declining muscle mass may cause the skin of the upper arms to flop and dangle. These loose folds of skin, explains Dr. Lim, have the unfortunate tendency to swing like pendulums with every arm movement.

“Waving sets the loose skin on the upper arms wobbling in a wavelike motion. Hence, it creates a condition known as ‘bat-wing’ arms, or what we normally refer to as ‘bye-bye’ arms,” adds Dr. Lim.

The problem of sagging or flabby arms is usually seen in people who lose or gain a lot of weight. “This is because overweight individuals tend to store fat in the upper arms,” remarks aesthetic medical practitioner Dr. Abrizah Ousman, known as Dr. Abby. She then adds, “The skin around the arms is stretched like a water balloon. If the individual loses a lot of weight – the skin will not snap back to its original firmness. Consequently, this stretched skin ends up drooping below the arms.”

In order to avoid embarrassment, people who suffer from loose upper arm skin tend to wear clothes with sleeves – to hide their arms. “I have had patients who come to me and share their worries and frustration over being teased about their flabby arms,” says Dr. Abby.

## THE OPTIONS

So, how do you get rid of crepey, flabby arms – so that you don’t have to keep your upper arms hidden from view? There is the surgical approach – the arm lift or brachioplasty. A brachioplasty entails surgical removal of loose skin and fat from the upper arms, then sewing it up. While the procedure does indeed give the arms a firmer, slimmer silhouette, scarring is unavoidable. As such, depending on how well your skin heals from wounds, you may still want to wear tops with sleeves on them to hide the scars from view. Despite the scarring, however, for the very obese person who has lost weight, brachioplasty is probably still the best option. This surgical option is also a permanent solution, provided the patient does exercise and doesn’t put on huge amounts of weight again. Liposuction is also an option for removing fat that can be done on its own or in conjunction with other skin tightening treatments.

For those who are not ready to go under

the knife or have a scar on the inner side of their arm – there have been many remarkable breakthroughs for tightening and removing fat non-invasively. Dr. Lim explains, “Most of the new technologies introduced for fat removal can target specific areas of body fat using energy delivered, as either heat or cold. These treatments are able to utilise energies, while still leaving the skin intact.”

These treatments include lasers, ultrasound, radiofrequency energy, or a combination of these. They are designed to deliver energy to fat and collagen cells within the skin to stimulate rejuvenation and reduce circumference – by “working through the skin, without cutting it,” adds Dr. Lim.

## • Melt Fat With Radiofrequency Waves

The radiofrequency (RF) waves used in Thermage® work on superficial layers of the patient’s skin – through controlled bursts of energy, tightening and rejuvenating the collagen layers. Thermage has been on the market for many years now. The unipolar RF in Thermage® allows a much deeper uniform penetration of energy than that obtained using bipolar radiofrequency devices.

“The heat initiates collagen remodelling in our skin by tightening and contracting the collagen fibres that lie deep in the skin of the arms; thus, it reduces the appearance of fat in the process – adding more definition to the arms,” explains Dr. Abby. While it heats the deeper layers of skin, resulting in immediate collagenesis, it simultaneously protects the outer layer of the skin by cooling.

The treatment can also have a “plumping” effect on wrinkled or lined skin, which means rejuvenated and younger-looking skin. “It also smoothens out the surface of the arms, giving it a more textured look,” adds Dr. Abby. However, Thermage can be painful. “Therefore, oral sedation is used before treatment,” remarks Dr. Abby,

PICTURES COURTESY OF DR. ABRIZAH OUSMAN.



Before and after Thermage® treatment on the arms.





PICTURES COURTESY OF DR. ALBRIZAH QUSMAN.

**Thermage® is an effective treatment to tighten and tone up flabby arms.**

who has been providing the treatment since 2008.

Reiterating what Dr. Abby says, Dr. Lim adds that there is much advertising about newer less effective treatments being painless, which is somewhat misleading. Dr. Lim explains, "In order to tighten loose skin and give immediate results, adequate heat must be applied to the skin causing the collagen to contract. If you do not heat the collagen adequately, the collagen will not shrink."

Our bodies normally process the sensation of high heat as a sensation of pain. "Therefore, the stronger the heat, the more powerful is the signal. Common sense tells us that if there is no discomfort, it is because there is little or no energy being applied to the skin – and therefore poor or no results. Simply put, inadequate energy equals inadequate results," emphasises Dr. Lim.

Adequate energy, however, does not mean that you have to suffer. "Patients are awake during the entire procedure, but the pain pathways have been dulled which makes the treatment tolerable," he adds. According to Dr. Lim, Thermage® is a very versatile procedure that can be used on any area of the body – from large areas to very small areas. In addition, "patients can return to

their regular activities immediately, as there is no downtime with this procedure," he adds.

The treatment lasts about 45 to 60 minutes. The number of shots depends on the patient's pain threshold. Normally, it requires about two to six months, before significant results can be observed. "The results involve other factors too which vary from case to case," explains Dr. Abby. "This is a treatment that requires frequent maintenance. If you want to maintain sleeker-looking arms, I'd advise patients to have the treatments once a year," adds Dr. Abby.

For people who are not considered overweight, but have stubborn pockets of unwanted fat around the arms that are not responding to diet and exercise – Thermage® might be the non-invasive option.

**COST:** At RM8,000 – RM10,000 this non-surgical option makes surgery look attractive, especially if the treatment has to be repeated yearly. Results can be observed over six to 10 months.



### • Freeze the Fat!

Based on the science of Cryolipolysis™, CoolSculpting™ is one of the latest fat busting breakthroughs. This treatment gets rid of fat by freezing it.

CoolSculpting selectively targets localised fat deposits, without causing any harm to the surrounding tissues. CoolSculpting™ is also approved in Europe and Canada for fat-reduction treatments and in the US for cooling and anaesthetising prior to other treatments.

The cooling plates are used in the vacuum applicator to freeze the water within the fat cells. After converting them into ice-crystals, the damaged fat cells are removed from the body via the liver. "The treatment is very safe as it involves no needles, surgical incisions and downtime," explains Dr. Lim. Patients may experience temporary redness or numbness on the arms. "But, they can go back to their daily activities right away after the treatment, without any bed rest or hospital stay," says Dr. Lim.

The results may differ from individual to individual. "Patients may require more than one or two sessions or checkups, depending on the condition of their arms," explains Dr. Lim.

**COST:** RM3,000 – RM3,500

Results depend on the patient's lifestyle and whether she does regular exercise.

## • Laser Skin Tightening

Designed to stimulate dermal collagen production and regenerate damaged skin cells, "GentleYAG<sup>®</sup>, a laser skin tightening treatment (LST), produces single-wave-length light energy that targets fibroblasts in the dermis, which produce new collagen in response to laser energy," explains Dr. Abby.

Increased turnover of skin cells is also stimulated, helping to regenerate and replace damaged cells. "Another unique feature of the GentleYAG<sup>®</sup> is the Dynamic Cooling Device which sprays a cooling agent on the skin before every laser pulse," remarks Dr. Abby. This protects the outer skin layers during laser treatment and reduces discomfort. No topical numbing agents are required. "There's no darkening of the skin or post-inflammatory hyper-pigmentation (PIH) after treatment. It is a safe treatment," says Dr. Abby.

"Laser skin tightening or LST can be used to treat any part of the body that may benefit from softer, smoother skin quality, wrinkle reduction, or improvement of pore size and texture. That explains why it's also used for the arms," says Dr. Abby. The non-ablative GentleYAG<sup>®</sup> treatment can provide firm skin on the upper arms with no downtime and without the need for numbing creams. Clinical studies suggest that four to six treatments, spaced two to four weeks apart in most cases, will produce a significant increase in dermal collagen, remodeling of dermal matrix components - hence, resulting in improvement of overall skin tone and vitality. Results are observed after the second session of the treatment.

LST is not likely to reduce very fat arms into small ones but is a treatment for firming arms that are not too large to begin with. It is also a treatment for smoothing and improving the skin on the arms.

**COST:** RM2,000

Results can be observed as early as after two sessions of treatments, or after four to six sessions.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

All the treatments mentioned above are an alternative to surgery to regain firmer arms. As such, it is advisable to do the treatments early - before signs of sagging begin. "You wouldn't want to wait until the skin is very saggy before going for the treatment," remarks Dr. Abby. "Patients should be realistic in their expectations."

"It still boils down to the patient's discipline and consistency," adds Dr. Lim.



PICTURES COURTESY OF DR. ALBRIZAH OUSMAN.

**GentleYAG<sup>®</sup> laser skin tightening treatment also improves skin texture and appearance.**

"You can go for countless treatments - and most of them involve money - but if you do not take care of your lifestyle and diet, it's back to square one," concludes Dr. Lim.

Patients should watch what they eat. Patients should not eat junk or fatty foods. "Exercise and a nutritious diet will help you to retain the results," advises Dr. Lim.

Explaining how patients can maintain the results through day-to-day care, Dr. Abby concludes: "Skin laxity is also caused by continued sun exposure and ultraviolet rays, as this results in the breakdown of both existing and new collagen over time. Therefore, less sun exposure keeps your skin firm. Also, exercise and drink lots of water." Of course, if the problem is really bad, talk to a plastic surgeon about surgical options too!

## SLIMMER ARMS – THE GOOD OLD FASHIONED WAY!

You've heard it from the doctors. Exercise and diet are the best ways to maintain toned arms. So, if you want arms like Jennifer Aniston or Madonna, then you have to do what they do - exercise!

According to Club Manager & Personal Trainer of Clark Hatch Fitness Centre, Mr. Logeshwaran Suppiah (Mr. Logesh), when it comes to the arms, "small effort makes a big difference." The first step, however, is to examine your diet.

"Reality check. There's no need to get technical and count the calories or weigh your food on the scale. It's common sense - you want the bulk of your diet to consist of vegetables of the leafy, green and orange assortment, low fat proteins, little to no fat and protein supplements," he adds.

Research has shown that regular cardio and strength training, in conjunction with a sensible diet, is the only way to truly eliminate excess body fat - which is what helps those sculpted, toned muscles to become visible.

The results depend on how diligent and disciplined you are. "If you follow the training guidelines and a proper diet, you can see the results within eight weeks," remarks Mr. Logesh. "It's all about taking that first step. Once you have the exercise and diet in place, your fatty problems will be solved. Remember, small effort makes a big difference," he reiterates.

**REFER TO FITNESS SECTION FROM PAGE 98 FOR DUMBBELL CURLS AND CHAIR DIPS - FOR ARM EXERCISES YOU CAN DO AT HOME!**



Mr. Logeshwaran Suppiah