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New Fat Removal Technique Getting Raves: Is it Safe? Does It Work?



(New York-WABC, February 7, 2003) — A medical technique that's just catching on in America promises to melt your fat away. It's called mesotherapy, and while some people swear by it many doctors aren't so sure. [Stacey Sager](#) has the story.

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Dr. Marion Shapiro: "OK, what I'm doing right now is I'm injecting a combination of medications that melt the fat under the skin."

And believers say it works wonders. In fact, Christine Comba says she's now lost 25 pounds of fat.

Christine Comba, Mesotherapy Patient: "My bra size went down. I was wearing a 14, I'm now wearing a 10 in jeans."

Doctor Marion Shapiro is a former emergency room doctor who now performs this procedure in West Orange, New Jersey. It's known as Mesotherapy. It's for patients who want to lose weight or just sculpt their body. It's called Mesotherapy because it involves the injections of four to seven different compounds into the mesodermal layer of the skin.

Dr. Marion Shapiro, Mesotherapist: "What happens is when you inject the medication beneath the skin, it melts the fat and helps it dissolve and be excreted by the body."

Dr. Shapiro tells us she trained for the procedure in France, where this has been done since 1952. But it has never caught on here in the states. In fact, only a handful of doctors are doing it and some of the most well-known plastic surgeons in the city strongly caution patients about it because no US studies on Mesotherapy even exist.

Dr. Norman Schulman, Lenox Hill Hospital: "Don't do it. Wait till the homework is done. It may turn out to be something OK, but certainly not now."

Stacey Sager, Eyewitness News: "And you wouldn't feel comfortable doing it now?"

Dr. Schulman: "I would not do it now."

But patients continue to rave. They say it's much less invasive than liposuction, and that Mesotherapy works all over the body.

The big question is really whether the fat can come back. Technically, yes, because the fat cells remain intact, so diet and exercise are still key.

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But the skeptics continue to wonder, especially about side effects and so-called "off-label use." That is, medications that may be FDA approved, but not together for this purpose together.

Dr. Schulman: "If you do have an adverse affect from off-label use, you're going against the directives of the FDA."

Sager: "So you could be held liable?"

Dr. Schulman: "You absolutely could be."

Dr. Shapiro: "There's been no case reports of ill effects from mesotherapy. And I would assume by this time that we would know, since 1952."

So Doctor Shapiro continues to believe in a treatment her patients love, even though the test of time in this country remains to be seen.