

Would You Freeze or Burn Your Love Handles Off?

We compare two interesting options: CoolSculpting and SculpSure



Ask a guy at the gym what he likes least about his body, and don't be surprised when he says "love handles." These pockets of fat are famously stubborn. You might feel like you're in the best shape of your life and still not be able to shake those little bits of chub on either side of your waistline.

"With guys the most popular area of concern is love handles," says Dr. Marina Peredo, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of NYC's Skinfluence, "because you can work out and not get rid of them."

For years, the cosmetic answer was liposuction. Vacuuming your fat out through a needle was a sure way to get rid of it—and quickly. But if just reading that made you clench your teeth, then you'll need another option. The past 10 years have seen the rise of non-invasive treatments, meaning ones that don't involve surgery. These use either cold or heat to kill fat cells in problem areas, and take about as long as you'd need for a relaxed lunch. So, if you're ready to crush your love handles once and for all, do you freeze the fat or cook it? Here's what the doctors say.

Coolsculpting: Freezing the Fat

"There are different ways to destroy fat," says Peredo. "You can heat it, or you can freeze it. Freezing is the most natural."

During CoolSculpting, your love handle will be placed into a suction applicator, which delivers targeted cold temperatures. The idea is that the fat cells are damaged by the cold, they rupture, and your body gradually absorbs them.

Treatment takes about an hour per area, and patients report discomfort from the cold. Afterward, some complain about intense pain, or uneven areas where the freezing took place. Others say they were able to get on with whatever they normally do with next to no downtime.

As with all cosmetic procedures, costs depend on how much treatment you get, as well as where you live. A typical average for CoolSculpting is around \$2000, but can range up to \$4000.

On the upside, if your love handles are small, a single treatment may be enough. "CoolSculpting is still the gold standard in the industry because the results are very predictable," says Peredo. "For people who don't have huge love handles, sometimes one treatment is enough, and once it's done that area never comes back."

Laser Treatment: Feel the Burn

What's giving CoolSculpting a run for it's money? Heat treatment with a laser. Known as SculpSure, this treatment has garnered a lot of interest since its FDA approval a few years back, and claims to beat CoolSculpting in terms of effectiveness and speed.

The difference here is temperature. With SculpSure, very high temperatures cook the fat cells, which are then similarly processed away by the body.

"We're seeing a lot of guys who are actually super fit coming in to have a little fat removed with the laser," says Dr. Hooman Khorasani, Chief of Dermatologic and Cosmetic Surgery at Mount Sinai's Icahn School of Medicine in NYC. "It has plates the size of an iPhone 4 that cool the skin, then the beam penetrates about an inch, heating up the cells."

The practical difference here is time. Where CoolSculpting takes an hour per treatment site, SculpSure takes about 25 minutes—so you can do both love handles on one lunch break. Cost is also lower, around \$1500 average.

The treatment itself can be uncomfortable. Patients say the heat produces a cramping sensation, which is broken up by cooling cycles. Afterward, treated areas can be red and tender to the touch, and some patients report areas of firm tissue—which can also happen with CoolSculpting. With both procedures, the level of pain experienced during recovery depends on how your body reacts.

As for results? Both procedures require patience. "The negative with all these non-invasive treatments is that the results are slower to show," says Peredo. That can mean up to 12 weeks, and even then, you're looking for a subtle recontouring of your waist, not dramatic weight loss.

"It's not like we're putting people on the covers of magazines and giving them six packs," says Peredo. "But areas that bulge—especially love handles for men—can go away."