



slim arms

Do you feel the flesh under your arms jiggle about when you wave at someone? Do you refrain from wearing anything strapless or sleeveless to hide your sausage arms? Well, you are not alone! Many people hide their bat wings. A confidence dampener, they can make fitting into nice clothes difficult and wearing anything sleeveless rather awkward, if not impossible. No matter how naturally lithe your arms may be, if you don't exercise and build them up with weight training, sooner or later you will get these flappers. Fortunately, there are solutions to this problem, whether in the form of good old-fashioned exercises to get those arms taut and ripped; or with surgery; or through treatment with machines that slim down and tighten up the arms. Here, we present your options.

Arm Lift Surgery

SHEETAL WALIA SPEAKS TO PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGEONS DR. EILEEN FONG AND DR. CHEONG YOU WEI ABOUT BRACHIOPLASTY TO GET RID OF THOSE BAT WINGS.

Brachioplasty, or an upper arm lift, is normally performed on patients with a large amount of sagging skin on the upper arms. This problem normally occurs when someone has lost a significant amount of weight, leaving loose, hanging skin. While liposuction may also be performed on top of a brachioplasty if needed, patients should be reminded that an arm lift is not a substitute for weight loss. In fact, the best results from this surgery are obtained after the patient has attained their target weight.

Arm lifts are said to be one of the key operations that patients opt for after losing a huge amount of weight. Weight gain or loss, aging and your genes can cause your upper arms to sag.

Consultant plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Eileen Fong explains, "All patients with a rather large contour deformity of the upper arm are potential candidates for brachioplasty if their health and age are right."



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TYPES OF BRACHIOPLASTY

According to plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Cheong You Wei, brachioplasty involves resection of the saggy excess skin in the upper arm to achieve tightening and improvement of the upper arm contour. Depending on the severity of the condition, there are three types of brachioplasty that can be performed:

- **Full brachioplasty** – for the most severe cases. The incision extends from the apex of the axilla (the area directly under the joint where the arm connects to the shoulder), along the whole length of the side of the upper arm and ends at the side of the elbow.
- **Modified brachioplasty** – which is similar to a full brachioplasty except that the incision stops at the middle part of the upper arm. This operation is for cases of moderate sagging.
- **Limited brachioplasty** – where the incision is limited to the axilla area. This is for cases where skin laxity is limited to the proximal upper arm and around the axilla.

THE PROCEDURE

All the procedures are usually done under general anaesthesia. The procedure starts off with the surgeon creating markings around the patient's elbows, arms and armpits. Depending on the type of brachioplasty, the location, length and direction of these incision lines would be different. The surgeon will then make the required incisions to remove excess skin and fat. The incisions may be completely concealed within the armpits or may extend down the insides of the arms. The surgeon may also perform liposuction to remove excess fat. After this, the surgeon will remove the excess skin and fat from the arm before sewing it back up. The incisions will be sewn up carefully to minimise scarring. Elastic bandages will then be applied to support the area. Fi-



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

A patient after brachioplasty where the excess hanging skin was surgically removed.

nally, the skin is smoothed over and the new slimmer arm contour should become apparent.

"Upper arm reduction and lift usually takes approximately two hours depending on the amount of reduction required and whether other procedures like liposuction are performed," Dr. Cheong explained.

AFTER CARE AND WHAT TO EXPECT

With brachioplasty procedures, particularly with severe bat wings, pain can be significant in the first few days, as deep tightening sutures are used to prevent the scar

from stretching. Strong pain killers are prescribed and the patient normally stays at the hospital overnight for observation. "Post operative swelling and bruising is common and may take three to four weeks to subside. During this time, surgical sleeve compression garments should be worn to provide gentle and comfortable compression," Dr. Eileen said.

All brachioplasties leave scars. The extent of the scars depends on the type of brachioplasty that is performed. "For limited brachioplasty the scar is confined to the axilla. For modified brachioplasty the scar is located in the axilla and proximal part of the upper arm. For full brachioplasty the scar extends from the axilla to the elbow," Dr. Cheong says.

"Another fact that needs to be remembered is that Caucasians with naturally fair skin and blonde hair tend to heal better and end up with finer scars. Asians with very fair skin also fall into the same category. Darker skinned Asians tend to end up with keloids and obvious scarring and should be advised of this," Dr. Eileen says.

According to Dr. Cheong, the improvements can be seen immediately after the operation. However, because of post-op swelling and bruising, the final results are only apparent a month or two later, when all the swelling has subsided.

Dr. Eileen adds, "For arms with minimal to moderate contour deformities the results are usually excellent! But with larger, markedly saggy arms, it is more difficult to produce a truly tight and perfect contour as well as an absolutely fine scar. Even with a tight deep layer, closure and many internal stitches, the scar on the arms with very large resections does tend to spread."

DOS AND DON'TS

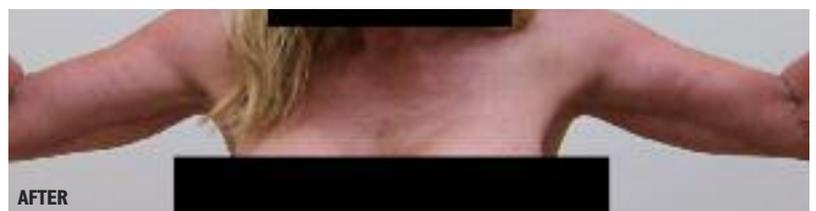
Like any other surgery, there are dos and don'ts that patients have to adhere to in order to ensure successful surgery and outcome. Before surgery, patients are strictly reminded not to smoke for two weeks to reduce complications. They are also made to stop all medicine or supplements that can increase bleeding such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), warfarin, supplements that contain vitamin E, garlic, ginseng and ginkgo as these are all blood -thinning agents and can complicate things further.

After the operation, patients should refrain from doing strenuous activity for one month and should not forget to wear the pressure garment that they are given for at least one month after surgery.

COMPLICATIONS

There are always potential complications with any surgery but with brachioplasty, it is quite unusual. According to Dr. Cheong, some numbness over the medial arm may occur but this will usually go away after a few months. In healthy patients, haematomas, infection and skin loss are extremely rare complications. "Patients with neurologic and vascular problems of the upper extremities, such as Raynaud's disease, connective tissue disorders, uncontrolled diabetes and advanced rheumatoid arthritis are not candidates for this procedure," Dr. Eileen advises.

Depending on the severity of the condition, there are three types of brachioplasty that can be performed: full brachioplasty, modified brachioplasty or limited brachioplasty.



PICTURES COURTESY OF DR. CHEONG YOU WEI.

slim arms

Non-invasive Arm Contouring

WHILE INVASIVE PROCEDURES WORK WONDERFULLY AND PRODUCE ALMOST IMMEDIATE RESULTS THEY ALSO MEAN CONSIDERABLE PAIN, RECOVERY AND DOWN TIME. NOT EVERYONE HAS THE LUXURY TO TAKE LENGTHY PERIODS OF TIME OFF FOR RECOVERY. WITH NEW AGE TECHNOLOGIES BEING RELEASED ON THE MARKET VERY OFTEN, **SHEETAL WALIA** TALKS TO TWO DOCTORS ABOUT NON-INVASIVE TREATMENTS FOR FAT ARMS.

• LAVATRON ARMS

Associate professor & consultant dermatologist Dr. Lee Chew Kek Irene explains how the Lavatron radiofrequency machine works to slim down arms.

Dr. Lee, tell us more about Lavatron.

Dr. Lee Chew Kek Irene: Lavatron is a radiofrequency machine. It is a high frequency (RF) machine that has an inbuilt sensor in electrodes for impedance monitoring and automatic temperature control for achieving best results. It runs on two modes, monopolar and bipolar. The basic principle of Lavatron lifting is the same as high frequency devices but Lavatron has temperature control functions which are more advanced than conventional high frequency devices. The main mechanism for this machine is via the heating of the skin, mainly the second layer of the skin which is called the dermis. About 80 percent of the dermis is collagen. Collagen gives your skin strength, while elastin, as its name implies, enables your skin to stretch and bounce back; it is elastic.

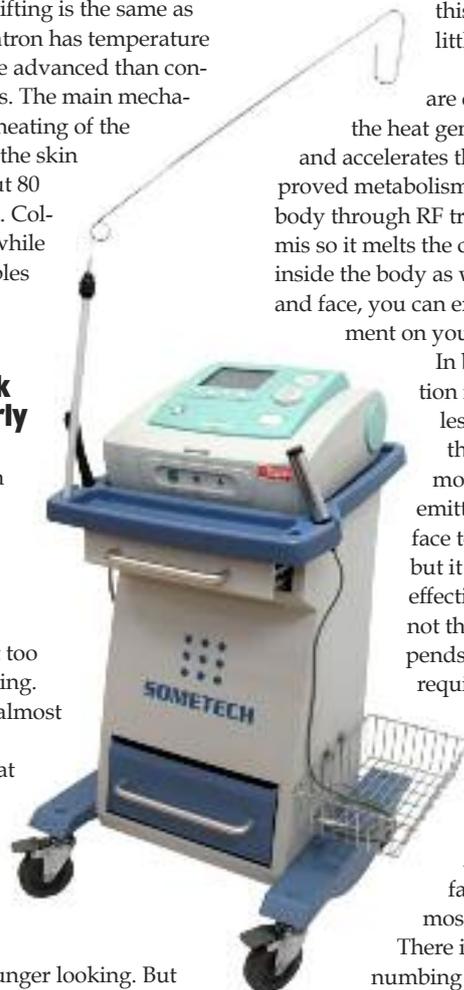
How does Lavatron work on saggy skin, particularly around the arms?

Before I tell you how it works on the skin, it is important to know that there are two types of reactions – immediate and delayed. The immediate result is that it causes the elastin to contract. Of course, the collagen can contract too and can cause some skin tightening. As such, the results can be seen almost immediately.

As for the delayed reaction, at times heat causes collagen in our skin to reorganise. The more it gets organised, the better the look of your skin will be. The heat also helps the skin to stimulate more collagen, making it tighter, firmer and younger looking. But



Associate professor & consultant dermatologist Dr. Lee Chew Kek Irene explains that the Lavatron has two modes which are quite different. The monopolar mode is effective on both the face and body. The bipolar mode is more suited to the face.



this takes time so the results may be a little delayed.

The Lavatron has two modes which are quite different. In monopolar mode, the heat generated damages the old collagen and accelerates the generation of new collagen by improved metabolism and supplying new nutrition to the body through RF treatment. Heat penetrates to the dermis so it melts the cellulite. It is effective to remove fat inside the body as well. With this strong effect on body and face, you can expect visible results right after treatment on your body and face.

In bipolar mode, the depth of penetration is fixed and limited. This means that less energy of sufficient density reaches the deeper skin layers, rendering a more superficial effect regardless of the emitted energy level. It is effective on the face to remove wrinkles and to tighten but it cannot touch the fat cells so it is not effective for the body. For the arms, it is not that suitable. Which mode we use depends largely on the place the tightening is required. It is important to know that this machine is mainly for skin tightening and not for fat burning.

What does the treatment involve?

As we all know radiofrequency is a fairly simple procedure. You could almost call it a lunch time procedure.

There is no need for any anaesthetic or numbing cream because it is better for the pa-

tients to feel the heat as they can inform us if they feel uncomfortable. There is no pain involved as such, just a little warmth. The arm lifting procedure will take about 40 minutes to an hour and there will be no downtime. There will be a little bit of redness from the heat but this will disappear in no time.

What post-procedure care is required for bat wings?

When a patient comes for bat wings using Lavatron, we would normally prepare them for two phases, the first one being intensive and the second one being maintenance. Intensive is when they are advised to come in one to three times a week depending on how bad their bat wings are. This is then followed by maintenance which requires treatments once a month.

• ALMA ACCENT ULTRA

Consultant bariatric surgeon Dr. Andrea Ooi explains the workings of the Alma Accent Ultra – a machine that offers minimally-invasive ultrasound and radiofrequency options for more toned looking arms.

Tell us more about the ALMA Accent Ultra.

Dr. Andrea Ooi: Firstly, the Alma Accent Ultra has radiofrequency and ultrasound. Ultrasound focuses on the localised fat and ruptures fat cells. Radiofrequency has a thermal effect which increases the circulation and the lymphatic drainage at the same time causing the collagen to contract. This is when the area being focused on has a tightening effect. This technology works on all parts of the body, regardless of a patient's age or skin type. The treatments are comfortable with a minimal risk of side effects and no downtime. The Alma Accent Ultra Combines two technologies into one safe and non-invasive system for body and facial contouring.



Before and after treatments with Alma Accent Ultra.



Consultant bariatric surgeon Dr. Andrea Ooi explains that the Alma Accent Ultra procedure takes around 45 minutes to complete for both arms.

How can this technology help with bat wings?

The Alma Accent Ultra contouring platform integrates ultrasound and radiofrequency (RF) technologies into one non-invasive procedure to achieve superior results for the treatment of hard-to-remove fat and cellulite, to tighten skin and to beautifully contour both the body and face.

The combination of hot and cold ultrasound and RF energy during the same session results in the most optimal damage to fat cells without causing any damage to nerves, vessels or surrounding tissue. The ultrasound waves penetrate through the skin to the subcutaneous fat, resulting in significant thermal damage to the fat cells. The fat cells release their content into the body, where their removal from the body via the lymphatic and renal systems is assisted by the RF waves.

The result is a noticeable softening of wrinkles in the treatment area. Accent treatment provides gentle and thorough heating deep into the skin. Circular motions of the treatment hand piece and non-invasive temperature monitoring ensure that heating is uniform. As the dermis increases in temperature, a natural reaction occurs that promotes the creation of new collagen. The result: a return to the smooth, shapely and elastic skin around the arms. This procedure takes around 45 minutes to complete for both arms.

Are the results immediate?

The ALMA Accent Ultra causes the deep structures of your skin to tighten right away; results are immediately visible. The long-term results are based on the development of new collagen fibres and are progressive over six to 12 months. Thus, further skin tightening occurs, yielding even more beautiful, natural looking and firmer skin. While just one or two treatments can be effective, follow-up procedures are usually recommended for optimal results.



PICTURES COURTESY OF DR. DINKO KALITERNA.

Fit Arms

THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS. EXERCISING MAY BE TEDIOUS BUT IT CAN BE WELL WORTH YOUR WHILE. **SHEETAL WALIA** SPEAKS TO FITNESS INSTRUCTOR, **RAFIQ MUSTAPHA**, TO FIND OUT HOW TO AVOID AND TO TIGHTEN UP BAT WINGS.

WHAT CAUSES BAT WINGS?

Bat wings occur for many reasons. Lifestyle, sleeping patterns and unhealthy food are the primary reasons why bat wings occur. It is important for those who want to avoid getting flabby jiggly arms to watch their carbohydrate intake. This is because if carbohydrate is not burned it turns into glucose and the body will eventually store it as fat. The most common areas for the body to store this fat is in the thighs, hips, upper back and arms.

What exercise can we do at home to achieve slimmer arms?

Rafiq Mustapha: The upper arm is made up of several muscles: the biceps, the deltoids and the triceps underneath. This is the area where bat wings form. To get toned, I would normally advise people to focus on training with light weights but with high repetition. This way the arms will not get too bulky but will be toned instead.



EXERCISES TO DO

Bicep curls, tricep extensions and perhaps deltoid lifts are the best for getting rid of bat wings. These are simple and work the whole arm.

- **Bicep curls:** You can do this both arms at once or one at a time. If both arms, stand straight with weights in your hands, palms forward. Bending your elbow, with your forearm, lift the weight up to the count of three and bring it down again slowly. If you are doing one arm at a time, you can sit down and rest your elbow on your leg and concentrate the weight that way.
- **Tricep extensions:** With both hands, hold the weight over your head and bring it down behind your head and up again. Alternatively, stand up and bend your knees. With your arms - with weights in your hands. While holding the upper arm still, move the forearms back and up, then down again.
- **Deltoid lift:** With a weight in each hand, position the feet hip-distance apart, slightly bending the knees. Hinge forward from your hips, keeping your back straight and allowing your arms to hang straight down with palms facing each other. Lift your arms up and back, keeping them straight, until they are at shoulder level, then lower.



are recommended over machines because they are said to be more effective and you tend to burn more calories.

REPETITIONS / SETS

Three sets of 12 to 20 reps would be ideal to start.

WEIGHTS

For basic exercises that are to be done at home, you can use dumbbells that are five to eight pounds. Increase weight after a few weeks - as it feels easier. Free weights

MORE TIPS

A do-anywhere exercise: hold your arms straight out to the sides with palms facing up. Circle forward 10 times, then backward 10 times. Flip your palms and repeat.