

Does It Work? Cryo Treatments

BY LIZ KRIEGER

We all wish we could put our minor health problems on ice. Well, some claim you can. Treatments utilizing below-freezing temps tout benefits ranging from improved athletic performance to fewer wrinkles and a slimmer waistline. Here, experts weigh in on three of the most popular trends (offerings vary depending on where you live, so search online for services near you).

COOLSCULPTING

WHAT IT IS: CoolSculpting (generically called cryolipolysis) is an FDA-cleared treatment—typically performed by a dermatologist—that uses frigid temperatures (around 12°F) to freeze and destroy fat cells. Cooling plates are attached to the target area (commonly the belly, waist, or thighs); you may initially feel intense cold, then the area goes numb.

WHAT WE KNOW: One research review found that

cryolipolysis reduced fat at treatment sites by up to 25% after one session. Patient satisfaction is high—73% say they're happy customers—and results are permanent. "Once those fat cells are gone, they're gone for good. If you gain weight, fat only accumulates in existing fat cells, so it won't build up in treatment areas," says Robert Anolik, M.D., a dermatologist in New York City.

SHOULD YOU TRY IT? Yes, if you're a candidate. "It's best for people who are in generally good shape but with a bit of excess fat around the abdomen, upper back, or thighs," says Dr. Anolik. Results take about a month to show because the body needs time to remove the fat cells. Most people require a few treatments.

COST: CoolSculpting can run \$500+ per treatment area.

CRYO-FACIAL

WHAT IT IS: Icy-cold liquid nitrogen (sometimes mixed with skincare ingredients) is



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applied to the skin with a hose-like attachment; it's purported to brighten, plump, and tighten skin by triggering new collagen production.

WHAT WE KNOW: There's no proof it boosts collagen production, says Rachel Nazarian, M.D., a dermatologist at Schweiger Dermatology in New York City, although the appearance of dark spots or sun damage may mildly improve because the top layer of skin cells is frozen off.

SHOULD YOU TRY IT? If you want to. Those with darker skin tones should be sure it's done by a reputable professional, since it may cause unwanted skin pigment changes, Dr. Nazarian says.

COST: Between \$45 and \$100+ per session.

CRYO-THERAPY

WHAT IT IS: It's said to help you lose weight, ease muscle pain, reduce inflammation, and treat migraines, arthritis, stress, Alzheimer's, and more. You strip, then don gloves, socks, and sometimes a headband or face mask, and step

into a cryochamber

filled with liquid nitrogen vapor that can be below -212°F.

WHAT WE KNOW: Science doesn't support the claims, says Dr. Nazarian. Plus, the FDA hasn't approved any cryochamber as being safe or effective.

SHOULD YOU TRY IT? Please don't. Extreme cold may lead to frostbite or eye injury, and exposure to liquid nitrogen in a small, enclosed space could cause oxygen levels to dip, resulting in unconsciousness or asphyxiation, warns the FDA. It's especially dangerous for people with diabetes or blood pressure and heart problems; it constricts blood vessels, hindering blood flow.

COST: From \$45 to \$100+ per session.