

Cd'A surgeon early adopter of fat-freezing procedure

Noninvasive treatment touted to help reduce love handles, belly bulge

By Mike McLean
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Coeur d'Alene surgeon Dr. Kevin Johnson says he's seeing growing interest in a relatively new nonsurgical fat-reduction alternative to liposuction.

Johnson, a sole practitioner who operates Advanced Aesthetics PLLC, at 608 Northwest Blvd. in Coeur d'Alene, has been performing the procedure called CoolSculpting for about a year.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved in late 2010 the CoolSculpting device, made by Zeltiq, of Pleasanton, Calif., for use in removing abdominal fat.

The procedure employs a process called cold lipolysis, which freezes certain fat cells and forces them to shut down and disappear in two to three months, reducing the fat layer by up to 25 percent.

The procedure is noninvasive, involves no needles, and causes no pain, Johnson says. One treatment can be followed by another within weeks, he says.

Most patients who opt for the procedure have it performed in more than one session and more than one area, he says.

Ideal candidates for CoolSculpting are close to their ideal weight, but with stubborn areas of fat resistant to diet and exercise, Johnson says.

He claims the results can be permanent.

"The cells that go away don't come back, and the body shape can be maintained with diet and exercise," he says.

Merely removing fat cells doesn't make someone healthier, but it can be motivating, he says.

"It can be a nice jump-start for people getting on the path to maintain good health," Johnson says.

A CoolSculpting treatment takes about an hour. An initial treatment costs about \$1,500, he says.



Dr. Kevin Johnson, of Advanced Aesthetics PLLC, says CoolSculpting is best for people who are close to their ideal weight and have some stubborn belly fat or love handles.

The CoolSculpting applicator device is a rectangular cup attached to a vacuum hose. Suction draws an isolated fatty area, such as a love handle, between two cooling pads in the cup.

The procedure makes the treatment area feel cold at first, and then it turns numb, Johnson says.

"Patients can read, watch a movie, or nap during the procedure," he says. "They can go home or go to work and have a normal day afterward."

Because fat freezes at a higher temperature than other tissues, the procedure causes no damage to skin, nerves, or blood vessels, Johnson says.

Johnson, operates Advanced Aesthetics in 3,000 square feet of leased space on the third floor of the Spokesman-Review Building in Coeur d'Alene, where the practice opened in 2005. The practice has six employees.

Overall, business and revenue is growing, thanks in part to the growing popularity of CoolSculpting, he says. Although

results are less dramatic and immediate with cold lipolysis than can be achieved through surgical procedures, such as liposuction, cold lipolysis usually is less expensive, he adds.

CoolSculpting, though, hasn't overtaken Smartlipo, a minimally invasive liposuction procedure he specializes in.

Smartlipo is a surgical procedure in which Johnson guides a narrow flexible tube through small incisions to emit laser energy in the treatment areas.

"The laser melts fat, cauterizes vessels, and tightens skin," he says.

Johnson, who graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine, offers monthly training courses in Smartlipo to other cosmetic surgeons.

Johnson says about 70 percent of his CoolSculpting patients and 90 percent of his Smartlipo patients are women.

Other procedures Johnson offers at Advanced Aesthetics include facial augmentation, Botox injections, and vein and skin treatments.