

COSMOPOLITAN

The Swimsuit Issue!

MAY 2001

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PETER BUCKINGHAM, Sittings editor; Orly Maguire-Moore, Hair; William Williams at I Group for Arrojo Cutler; Makeup: Gray for MAC at I Group; Manicure: Dida Parasciwolu for Aunt Centre Salon and BCM; Prop stylist: Olivia Sammons.

WACKO THINGS WOMEN DO TO THEIR BODIES

Cadaver-cell lip injections, labia snipping, makeup tattooing... women are requesting the most bizarre body work imaginable, and plastic surgeons are complying. Cosmo examines these weird, risky procedures. **By Linda Marsa**

"MAKE ME LOOK LIKE A CAT!"

We asked plastic surgeons to spill the craziest body-altering requests they've ever heard.

● Cat's Eyes

Some women are so cat crazy that they ask their surgeons to make them resemble their feline friends forever. "I've had patients pull back their lids with their fingers, saying they want me to create a catlike appearance," says David S. Felder, an ophthalmic plastic surgeon in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "I just shoo them out of my office."

● Sky-High Eyebrows

Eyebrow lifting is the latest rage, according to Michael A. Persky, a facial plastic surgeon in Encino, California, but some women are asking to have their brows lifted to the middle of their foreheads. Others request Botox injections under their brows, specifically seeking that wide-eyed, perpetually startled look.

● Mick Jagger Lips

It was a joke when Goldie Hawn's character in *The First Wives' Club* pumped her pucker with excess collagen, but the balloon-lip look is actually a popular request. "Their huge lips can dwarf the rest of the face," says Dr. Persky.

● The Pug Nose

The tiny turned-up nose is one of the most coveted snouts among plastic-surgery patients. The only problem, says Dr. Persky, is that "a cute pug nose doesn't suit most women's faces. What's worse, removing so much cartilage can cause some women's noses to collapse."

■ Patty Egan^o was devoted to her sky-high stilettos and the way they made her legs look superslim and sexy. But "wearing them was constant agony," says the 29-year-old New York City fashion designer; each step sent shooting pains up her legs. Fed up with heel hell, Patty decided to change not her shoes but her feet. Last October, she had a doctor perform a new laser surgery that plumps up and softens the balls of the feet, in effect padding them against the unnatural impact. "It's like magic—now I can wear the highest heels without any pain!" she exults.

That may sound like an extreme way to get more mileage out of your high heels, but Patty is hardly the only woman going into uncharted territory when it comes to plastic surgery. Once people stopped raising eyebrows over face-lifts and tummy tucks, it was probably inevitable that surgeons would begin to fix, alter, or improve less obvious body parts—all in the name of convenience or vanity. Today, women are being injected with cadaver cells to plump up their lips, using poison to stop profuse sweating, and even surgically changing the look—and feel—of their vaginas. Cosmo explores these wacky and

ate a bee-stung lip look and erase furrows," says Fredric Brandt, a dermatologist with offices in New York City and Miami.

Dr. Brandt says that hundreds of women across the country have received these cadaver-cell injections, which take roughly six shots over three to six months to dewrinkle a face and about four injections in two months to fill out lips. A syringe containing enough material for one injection costs between \$400 and \$500.

Side effects include a few days of redness and swelling, says Dr. Brandt, and a painful burning sensation postsurgery unless your doctor applies a numbing cream.

FREAKY FIX-IT 2

VAGINAL TIGHTENING

"My husband and I had great sex until I had a baby," says 28-year-old Yolanda Ramirez, a Queens, New York, sales associate. "My vagina was so much bigger after giving birth that I could barely feel him inside me and I had trouble climaxing."

So instead of trying Kegel exercises to tone vaginal muscles, Yolanda, like some other women, took a more drastic route: vaginal surgery, in which the wall muscles are stitched closer together to make the

"WE CAN CUSTOMIZE THE

possibly dangerous operations and discovers why women are spending big bucks to have them done.

FREAKY FIX-IT 1

CADAVER-CELL INJECTIONS

It sounds like something out of a low-budget horror movie—injecting skin cells from dead people into a living body. But that's just what women are having done to make their lips fuller and wipe out wrinkles.

In a procedure called soft-tissue augmentation, the next-to-top layer of skin is stripped off a human cadaver, then doctors inject that collagen-like material into a problem spot. The dead skin fibers also spur new tissue growth, which further fills out lines or plumps up lips. "Although it sounds ghoulish, it's the fastest way to cre-

channel smaller. "We can customize the vagina to any size the patient desires," says Luis Palma, a plastic surgeon at the Ridgewood Health and Beauty Center in NYC, who performed Yolanda's surgery.

While the procedure is most common among new mothers, they're not the only women asking for a snugger fit during sex. "We have patients with partners who aren't well-endowed, and they want to make sex better for both of them," says Dr. Palma.

While Yolanda was having her vagina tightened, she decided to have another sex-enhancing procedure called hymen reconstruction surgery, which requires using sutures as fine as human hair to meticulously repair the frayed remnants of the hymen to rebuild the vaginal tissue membrane. "My husband was so turned on because he'd never been with a virgin before," says Yolanda. "That first night, the sex was unbelievable!"

^oNames have been changed.

Hymen reconstruction surgery is often requested by young unmarried Latino, Arabic, and Asian women. "These are cultures that prize virginity," explains David Matlock, a gynecologist who has performed the operation for more than a decade on hundreds of women from 35 states and 20 countries at his Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Center in Los Angeles.

Despite their growing popularity, both surgeries are quite controversial. Many doctors say the end result doesn't justify the cost (upwards of \$3,800 per procedure, which is not covered by insurance) or the risks of surgery. Hymenal reconstruction can cause serious infection or scarring. Vaginal tightening is safer, although there's a chance of overtightening.

FREAKY FIX-IT 3 LABIA MAKEOVER

"My vaginal lips were superlong," says Judy Osborn, 31, an attorney in Atlanta. She was always incredibly embarrassed about them—especially in front of boyfriends in high school and college. So last year, she decided to pay \$2,000 for a labiaplasty, an operation in which a doctor clips the outer sections of the labia to make them



Makeup forever:
Tattoo liner on
your lids.

VAGINA TO ANY SIZE THE PATIENT DESIRES."

shorter or shapes the lips so they have a more symmetrical look. "I love the way I look when I'm naked now!" says Judy, who had her inner and outer lips snipped.

But getting a labial face-lift—usually not covered by insurance—could be costly to your sex life. Few surgeons are skilled in this procedure, so women run the risk of a botched job: permanent loss of sensation if too much of the sensitive skin is removed or ultrasensitivity if the surgeon hits a nerve. Even if the surgery goes smoothly, patients experience swelling for two to six weeks and can't have sex for a month while healing.

FREAKY FIX-IT 4 SWEAT-GLAND BLOCKING

For as long as she could remember, major perspiration made Mary Karnes' dating life a disaster. "A guy would grab my hand

at the movies, and there would be a little puddle of sweat on my armrest," she recalls. "It was mortifying." The excessive sweating from her palms, underarms, and feet made her life miserable. Then the 26-year-old San Francisco headhunter heard about a procedure in which doctors inject Botox—a bacterium that is poisonous in large quantities—into hands and underarms to deaden the nerves connected to sweat glands, preventing them from firing. Mary had to endure about 15 painful injections in her hands and 10 shots in each armpit to deactivate all the nerves. The shots cost about \$800 for underarms and \$1,600 for hands and need to be repeated about every six months.

But Mary says that it's worth it: "After my first procedure, I went out dancing in a tight dress without worrying that I would be dripping with sweat. I feel incredibly liberated."

For serious sufferers, another option is a sympathectomy in which a doctor snips the sympathetic nerve chain in the armpit to stop the nerve impulses to the sweat glands, says Mark J. Krasna, M.D., an associate professor of surgery at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. This permanent, one-time surgery costs \$4,000 to \$10,000 and might not be covered by insurance. About a third of patients experience excessive sweating afterward elsewhere in the body, such as on the small of the back or the inner thighs. If done incorrectly, the patient runs the risk of weak and numb hands for weeks.

FREAKY FIX-IT 5 SOLE SOFTENER

Like Patty, many stiletto-obsessed women, including some celebs, are fixing their feet to end high-heel pain. The technique