

THE NON-SURGICAL MOMMY MAKEOVER

By Julene Samuels, MD

Since the days when the “Mommy Makeover” first entered the national parlance amid some media skepticism, the public has finally grown aware of the very real needs of pre- and peri-menopausal women. As non-invasive modalities have become available to treat common functional and aesthetic female health concerns, the Mommy Makeover has emerged as a much sought-after service and is, in fact, best understood as a menu of available services.

To best serve the needs of patients, a “Mommy Makeover” should comprise a menu of procedures that can be customized to meet the specific needs of any individual. Beyond facial rejuvenation, women in their thirties and forties commonly seek treatment of vaginal laxity, dryness, changes in the labia, as well as abdominal fat reduction, tightening, and treatment of cellulite. According to the latest data from ASAPS, the number of vaginal rejuvenation procedures performed in 2015 increased 44% from 2014. Abdominal fat reduction and tightening procedures ranked among the top four surgical procedures in 2015, with liposuction being the most popular. Overall, nonsurgical procedures increased 22% from 2014 to 2015.

In my practice, I have used a trio of energy-based platforms from Syneron-Candela in order to provide my patients a customizable, efficient, and highly effective non-invasive Mommy Makeover. The CO₂RE Intima for vaginal remodeling, combined with the UltraShape Power for fat reduction and the VelaShape III for tightening allow me to meet the needs of a majority of my female patients. With these three devices, I am able to provide meaningful results without the downtime and costs of surgery or the actual or perceived risks of medical treatments like hormonal therapies and surgical treatments. Results are long-lasting and patient satisfaction is high.

INTIMATE WELLNESS

The CO₂RE Intima elegantly addresses the most common functional and aesthetic concerns of the vaginal area for pre- and peri-menopausal women. Women in late- and post-childbearing years may experience any or all of these symptoms to some degree: vaginal looseness or laxity, dyschromia, dryness, itching, burning, and dyspareunia (painful sex), labial laxity, sagginess or asymmetry, and stress urinary incontinence. For most women who are in good health and have received clearance from a gynecologist, these symptoms can be addressed non-surgically and

with no downtime using the CO₂RE Intima internal handpiece for internal/functional concerns and the CO₂RE Intima external handpiece for remodeling the of labia minora and majora.

CO₂RE Intima treats the internal vagina, external vulva and introitus (opening to the vagina), with the superior hygiene of single-use disposable hand pieces. For internal treatments, the CO₂RE Intima internal handpiece is inserted into the vagina where energy is deposited to remodel tissue for tightening and strengthening. This results in improved tone and flexibility of the vaginal canal. CO₂ thermal properties stimulate healing responses that enhance moisture levels in the vaginal canal and restore flexibility, tone and shape. Treatment is painless, and patients experience virtually no downtime, with the exception of refraining from sexual intercourse for several days.

For external treatments, the CO₂RE Intima external handpiece is used; treatments are also free of downtime, with no to minimal discomfort. Treatment can improve pigmentation, reduce sagging and help remodel labial tissue. While treatment is fully customizable and can be modified to meet the patient’s needs, most patients receive a series of three treatments with the CO₂RE Intima administered at four-week intervals.

The clinical benefits of CO₂RE treatment for vaginal remodeling are being assessed in a clinical trial, in which I am participating as an investigator. Interim analysis is available for 36 women who were treated for vulvo-vaginal atrophy (VVA). The Vaginal Health Index (VHI) was used to assess changes in vaginal elasticity, fluid volume, vaginal pH level, epithelial integrity and moisture. Vaginal health improved with successive treatments, with 89% and 97% of subjects showing highly significant improvement in the VHI scale after the first and second treatments, respectively. Eighty-six percent of subjects reported improvement in dryness ($p < 0.001$), 78% in dyspareunia ($p < 0.001$), and 64% in burning ($p < 0.001$).

Some of my peers question the role of core aesthetic physicians providing vaginal treatments. Of course, patients should be under the care of a gynecologist and be properly screened for all gynecologic health concerns. However, for those who are healthy and in whom aesthetic/functional concerns are not associated with any serious underlying medical condition, device-based treatment by an aesthetic physician is not only reasonable, but practical, as well. Our specialties pioneered and developed tissue-targeted therapies with energy-based devices. Vaginal remodeling applies the same principles to treat and restore aged tissue.

Furthermore, vaginal remodeling procedures complement the type of high-demand body contouring and facial rejuvenation procedures we already offer these women in our practices.

SHAPE UP

Already in high demand, non-invasive body contouring procedures continue to become increasingly popular. While liposuction is the most popular surgical aesthetic procedure and remains the gold standard for fat reduction, newer energy-based devices offer excellent results with no downtime and reduced risks. Among the latest offerings, ultrasound-based fat destruction with the UltraShape Power is a patient- and practice-friendly option.

Pulsed, focused ultrasound is used to target and destroy subcutaneous fat cells, which are then expelled by the body. Unlike focused ultrasound, which generates heat to destroy fat cells, this mechanical destruction of cells is not associated with any elevation in tissue temperature (tissue temperature increases no more than 0.8°). The use of built in imaging and guidance technology ensures effective and even treatment delivery.

Unlike cold or heat-based fat treatments, pulsed, focused ultrasound is associated with no pain, or downtime. There are no visible signs of the procedure, such as lumps, bumps, or bruising, and no demarcation lines. In some patients, results are visible as early as two weeks post treatment.

Clinical studies on UltraShape document a 32% reduction in fat layer thickness measured via ultrasound. This approach provides for more effective volume reduction in much less time over larger treatment areas than all other technologies. A full abdominal treatment takes about 32 minutes.

Whereas some fat reduction devices tout the ability to “set it and forget it,” allowing staff to leave the patient unattended through most of the treatment session, UltraShape Power allows for a more personalized patient experience. The patient is not tethered to the device, rather a treatment provider customizes the delivery of ultrasound energy via ultrasound transducer to the treatment area. Patients appreciate this personal attention, while the practice benefits from the ability to interact with the patient, building rapport and educating the individual about other services and treatments the practice offers. This a truly patient-centric experience that also benefits the practice.

TARGETING CELLULITE & LAXITY

Of course, abdominal fat is just one part of the problem for many women. Cellulite and skin laxity of the abdomen, thigh, and arms are also common concerns. The VelaShape III partners nicely with the UltraShape Power to address these additional concerns.

Cellulite forms when fat cells enlarge, creating increased volume in compartments with limited space. In the presence of firm fibrous septae, the skin dimples from the tension. Blood vessels and lymphatics become compressed, allowing intercellular fluids and physiological waste to accumulate. Once formed, this cellulite will not respond well to diet, exercise, or other interventions, including some purported energy-based systems. VelaShape III

works to reduce the appearance of cellulite by improving circulation and drainage and thus bolstering adipocyte metabolism. Treatment also improves the dermal structure to reduce tension and create a more even appearance to the skin surface. Powered by elos, VelaShape combines electro-optic and mechanical approaches for synergistic controlled thermal injury of dermal and hypodermal tissue. Bi-polar radio-frequency is combined with infrared light, and pulsed vacuum suction.

A new RF electrode design improves contact with the skin for better energy delivery to the fat layer with more comfortable treatment with no arcing or pinching. Tissue tightening effects in the abdomen can contribute to circumferential reduction with or without additional fat-targeting treatments.

Because VelaShape III targets connective tissue to stimulate collagen remodeling, the device can be used to address skin laxity and improve tone on the body and face. Many women seek Mommy Makeover treatments in their 30s and 40s and may not be prime candidates for aggressive tissue tightening or facial resurfacing procedures. However, tightening with the VelaShape III can provide a notable and natural-looking improvement in early signs of facial sagging and wrinkling.

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The combined use of the CO₂RE Intima, UltraShape Power, and VelaShape III allows me to provide a comprehensive package of treatments to my female patients that is efficient, effective, and customizable. Treatment packages are cost-effective and lifestyle-friendly for patients (as moms, few of my patients are able to commit to downtime or lengthy treatment times) and are profitable and practice-friendly for surgeons. Regimens can be easily developed to maximize operational flow while meeting the desires of existing patients and attracting new ones.

Seamless integration of these devices into practice allows for a comprehensive approach to female health, well-being, and beauty. Integration requires a similar comprehensive approach to practice planning and marketing. The demand for Mommy Makeovers already exists. However, patients will require education on what treatment options you offer, what works, and what doesn't. Patient counseling isn't onerous, but patients do need to separate fact from media hype. They'll appreciate that you and your staff give them time and attention, seek to understand their particular concerns, and offer treatments that you can tailor uniquely to them. This builds and a rapport and establishes long-term patient relationships that are the cornerstone of successful aesthetic practices. ■



Julene Samuels, MD, FACS is a board certified Plastic Surgeon in Louisville, KY who specializes in cosmetic plastic surgery and non-surgical non-invasive procedures.

Sponsored by Syneron Candela