

BEAUTY ENQUIRER Bound to work

Can a new taping treatment really remodel your body? Quick-fix sceptic *Jess Lacey* braves the binding to find out

I'M GETTING A BIT FED UP WITH slimming treatments. Whether it be laser zapping, ultrasound, infrared or cryogenic freezing, it seems there really are a million ways to blast a fat cell into oblivion. Thing is, after thorough research and first-hand guinea-pigging of all the above, I still haven't seen significant results or anything that lasts more than a week. Moreover, I'm yet to find a single independent medical professional who can confirm that any of these approaches really work, even theoretically. After a few months of earnest dieting and regular running, I've improved my figure more than with any of these 'quick fixes', so I think, for the time being at least, I shall leave well alone.

It's just as I've settled into my new life of hard physical graft and willpower that I get the call about the Natura Bissé Maxi-Firm Body Citric, a new treatment designed to sync and sculpt the body into a sleeker silhouette. I say I'm not interested, that I've sworn off all slimming treatments that are so hi-tech I'm baffled by the science.



'I guarantee this will not help you lose any weight at all' the PR at the other end of the phone shrieks in a last-ditch attempt at persuasion. And that's exactly what convinced me to try it.

I arrive at the beauty emporium that is Grace Belgravia and am whisked through an endless warren of airy relaxation spaces and into the treatment room where my therapist, Michelle, requests I get into a paper thong and lie flat on the bed. My entire body is cleansed and rubbed down with a gritty orange scrub until I am thoroughly prepped and entirely pink. Then she unseals an ampoule of

potent C+C ascorbic acid and works it into every inch of my body, even the awkward parts. This strictly-professional-use firming concentrate, made up almost entirely of vitamin C, has the ability to increase and improve the body's collagen, meaning better skin tone. It also increases levels of hyaluronic acid in the dermis for plumped-out cells. The only issue is that vitamin C disperses within seconds of coming into contact with the air (hence the airtight vial and the speed at which Michelle is applying it to my body). Mariah Carey levels of high maintenance, indeed. Patricia Fisas, head of product ►

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development at Natura Bissé, explains the science: 'What we have managed to develop is a progressive formulation with the ability to reinforce the dermal network, trigger a draining action of excess fluid retention, and improve micro-circulation. In addition, it also has an anti-glycation effect that inhibits the mechanisms that destroy skin fibres, preserving their structure, so reducing stretch marks and boosting the synthesis of collagen and elastin.'

She adds that they also blended *Kigelia africana* fruit extract into the ampoule, because of its high flavonoid and hormone-like molecule content, which boosts skin elasticity, as well as ginger extract to protect and reinforce the skin's structural network. A fair bit more than your usual body lotion, then.

Slathered in the stuff, it's now time for the main event – the taping. I'd been looking forward to this, half expecting to be wrapped from chest to knee like a mummy or a Hervé Léger bandage dress. But this is an entirely different approach, involving strips of tape placed with exact precision in alignment with my muscles. The tape is heavy-duty and dayglo orange – kind of sexy gaffer tape. Michelle starts off with some strips on my bottom, taping exactly over my glutes, then rolls me over for my thighs and stomach. It's not exactly a dignified process; she gets me to bend and stretch my legs so she can gauge the exact placement of my thigh muscles, cutting the tape to the correct length and then placing it along my inner thighs from bikini line to knee, occasionally

ripping it off to realign when it's not quite to her standard.

'So, if the tape's not to hold me in, what's it for?' I ask. Well, it turns out that NeuroMuscular Taping has been used for years in the medical fields to facilitate the muscle-healing process, a technique often used in physiotherapy and sports medicine.



'My husband tells me the strips make my derrière look like a Mexican wrestling mask'

The tape itself is very particular. Similar to skin in weight and elasticity, it has a specific design that increases subcutaneous space in order to stimulate better micro-circulation and improve muscle function without limiting movement.

I ask Fisas why the application is so meticulous and whether it really matters. 'The tape will perform its action over the area where it is placed, even down to the direction it's in,' she explains. 'This is why it's so important because, depending on the direction, the tape can have muscle-toning or muscle-relaxing effects.'

An hour later, I leave with four strips down my stomach, one on the inside of each thigh, another down the back of each thigh and four strips encircling my bum cheeks (which, later, my husband tells me makes my derrière look like a Mexican wrestling mask). I walk down Sloane Street with the gait of Dorothy's Tin Man but, by the time I reach my front door, I can barely feel anything on my skin.

Did I mention that I have five days of this? I've been instructed to sleep and shower with the strips of tape on, and

wear them all day long underneath my clothes. Then, when the five days are up, I am to start slathering myself in the at-home follow-up product, the Natura Bissé C+C Vitamin Body Lift (£75), to give the results a final boost and further prevent stretch marks.

To achieve the sculpting at its best, it's advised that you repeat the treatment three times. So if there's a particular event you're working towards, you start at least a month beforehand. I have no such time, though. I'm a bridesmaid the following weekend and haven't tried my dress on in three months, so this has got to work. The next five days pass without too much discomfort. Showering in the tape doesn't feel entirely hygienic, and having damp strips drying on your skin is pretty grim, but at least they don't show under my clothes. The main thing is how ridiculous I look naked, so I avoid the bathroom mirror at all costs.

I kept exercising and eating healthily as advised (after all, this is sculpting, not slimming, and the tape wasn't going to magic away the pounds), right up to my fifth day. Then it's time for the great removal – which I'm to do myself. Yeah, no one mentioned the part where you have to tear metre-long strips of highly adhesive tape off your body – it's like extreme waxing. Michelle had advised me to soak them in the bath for a while first but, of course, I ignore that information and instead choose to rip them all off in a series of swift and shocking motions, squealing with the removal of each one.

Finally, I stand naked in front of the mirror and am genuinely impressed with what I see. My stomach is pleasingly flatter, my thighs have that curvature of the suggestion of muscles and, yes, my bottom is still all there, but maybe just a little higher than before? Overall, my physique is smoother and more sculpted – to put it delicately, less lumpy.

The next day is the wedding – a beautifully hot day, and the kind that makes wriggling into a pair of Spanx a total nightmare. So I don't. Maybe it's the memory of what I'd seen in the mirror the day before, but I just think I don't really need the help. Or maybe this is what body confidence finally feels like? ■

The Natura Bissé Maxi-Firm Body Citric costs £180 per session and is available at Grace Belgravia, or contact naturabisse.com for more information



Natura Bissé C+C Vitamin, Ascorbic Acid Body Lift and the magic tape

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