

Procedure to freeze fat cells helps woman avoid more surgery

June 8 2012, By Harry Jackson Jr.

Breast cancer, a double mastectomy and kidney cancer - in all, nine surgeries in three years - left Kathleen Bindyke feeling like a battered warrior. But she decided to put herself into better shape than when the ordeal began.

She used surgery, exercise and nutrition. She has lost 32 pounds. She had a face lift. Her breasts are nearly completely reconstructed.

She sees a [personal trainer](#) three times a week and eats a healthful diet.

"I'm back in a swimsuit again," Bindyke said. "I want to look good again just to make me feel better."

But exercise, diet and [cosmetic surgery](#) took her just so far. She couldn't rid herself of a few midsection trouble spots.

"I think it's my age," she said. "Women over 50 have trouble getting rid of trouble spots. We [gain weight](#) after menopause; the whole midsection gets thicker. I was thin all of my life until menopause."

While the trouble spots looked back at her from the mirror, she was tired of surgery. Through a conversation with her reconstructive surgeon, she learned about a relatively new [cosmetic procedure](#) called "CoolSculpting," used for spot reducing.

A physician attaches an instrument that resembles a large document

clamp to areas of fat that refuse to disappear even with increased exercise and healthful nutrition.

"It's not for large volumes of fat," said Dr. Brock Ridenour of Ridenour Plastic Surgery in St. Louis County, Mo. Instead, it takes care of stubborn bulges such as muffin tops around snug pants, he said.

The instrument clamps to the body and gets cold. It doesn't freeze but gets cold enough that it fatally damages fat cells just beneath the skin.

"It doesn't have to be very cold; the skin doesn't freeze or [frostbite](#)," Ridenour said. "Except for the tugging on the skin, it's painless."

He couldn't say what the effective temperature was. The manufacturer, Zeltiq Aesthetics Inc., won't reveal that information.

Over several weeks or months, the [fat cells](#) die and their residue is absorbed into the body, Ridenour said. That absorption doesn't raise the fat content in the bloodstream, he said.

The procedure rids the area that was clamped of about 35 percent of its fat, he said.

Bindyke had the procedure about four months ago on her middle rib cage area. The bulges are shrinking, she says.

"There's no down time, no surgery, no pain medicine, no anesthesia," she said. "It takes about an hour. I fell asleep."

The first treatment costs \$1,500 and covers two "zones," she said - two sides to make sure her reshaping is even. The second treatment is \$1,000, she said.

Ridenour said the procedure is for people who want to avoid surgery. It's not as fast as liposuction, when a doctor vacuums out subcutaneous fat. That requires an operation and recuperation time.

The most attractive element of the 300 cases Ridenour has performed since the FDA approved the procedure is that it's not surgical, he said.

Bindyke agreed. "I didn't want to go back under the knife because I'd been through so many procedures," she said.

In 2008 she underwent surgery for renal cancer. She's now considered cancer free from that.

She had a face lift in 2009. In 2010 she was diagnosed with [breast cancer](#). She had two surgeries for the [double mastectomy](#). Six more surgeries were for reconstruction.

"When you go through what I've gone through, you don't want to do it anymore," she said.

She wonders about the source of her cancers. She spent many years traveling the world helping to set up and run eye clinics, and teaching surgeons about eye [surgery](#).

One place was Chernobyl. She worked in St. Petersburg, Russia, for several years. "I wasn't at the site, but I helped a lot of the victims. Other countries don't have the (safety standards) we have here," she said. "Or maybe, I was in 30 different nations. Maybe it was all that flying around and the radiation in the airplanes.

"I don't know, but there's no cancer in my family. So why would it show up like this?

"But you re-evaluate your life and look at the food you're eating, the water you're drinking."

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