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A CONSUMER GUIDE TO LIFE-ENHANCING PROCEDURES FOR HEALTHY LIVING

CALGARY HERALD
A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

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how to . . . lose weight

Help is out there for Calgarians fighting the battle of the bulge

Story by Rachel Naud. Photos by Paula Trotter and courtesy Booty Camp

For 40-year-old Calgarian James Bremner, losing weight meant going back to the school — or at the very least, undergoing a re-education of sorts.

The engineer, who dropped 70 pounds in eight months, says his secret to shedding the extra baggage was learning that he needed to take ownership of making the necessary lifestyle changes — they wouldn't happen on their own.

"Basically, it's all about education," says Bremner, "The professionals have been educating me about proper nutrition — how to read labels and recognize portion sizes. How to make lifestyle changes."

> What is it?

In this case, those professionals come by way of the Calgary Weight Management Centre, a patient-focused weight loss and weight management facilitator that provides comprehensive, healthy and realistic weight

loss and maintenance programs.

Participants are equipped with their own personal team of professionals, which include a doctor, a dietitian and an exercise specialist. Bremner says his team of specialists helped him understand why it's important not to skip meals, to plan his meals and to get moving.

Since joining last July, he made a physical commitment, and rides his bike to and from work every day as well as on weekends.

Bremner is not alone in fighting the battle of the bulge. According to a Heart and Stroke Foundation study released earlier this spring, two-thirds of Canadians reported difficulty in shedding five or more pounds over the past five years.

James Bremner, 40, credits lifestyle changes — such as riding his bike every day — to losing 70 pounds in eight months.



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cover feature

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Story by Shannon Sutherland
Photos by Paula Trotter
Hair and makeup by Diva Hair and Salon

It's almost difficult to believe Shikha Sharma was once embarrassed about her appearance. The poised and outwardly confident Calgarian had just moved to the city two years ago,

and had a great job, a great apartment and a great life. "But I still wasn't happy, because my skin was bothering me," says the 26-year-old technical support representative.

After receiving cosmetic treatments for her skin, however, Sharma says she became a woman transformed, and was eager to share her newfound self assurance with the world.

"I was confident. I felt good. I wasn't hiding any more. Now I love being photographed," she says.

Sharma is not alone. More than 17 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed last year in the U.S., according to the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery. (Governments and industry groups do not track these numbers in Canada.)

Yet why people like Sharma are undergoing certain cosmetic procedures and others are not, and how we define the "perfect" figure, are still up for debate.

Do we still feel pressured to have Nicole Kidman's nose, or Cate Blanchett's skin? Pamela Anderson's breasts or Angelina Jolie's lips? Studies would seem to suggest our definitions of beauty are changing — albeit slightly.

Earlier this year, Beverly Hills doctors Richard Fleming and Toby Mayer released their 2010 edition of "Hollywood's Hottest Looks." Would it surprise you to learn curvaceous singer Fergie supplanted actress Jennifer Aniston as having the ideal body type? Or that actor Robert Downey Jr. had the "perfect" nose for men, dethroning fellow leading man Leonardo di Caprio?

In a more scientific study conducted by the University College London and University of Newcastle, participants were shown images of women in five different body mass index categories, from the very thin (below 15) to the obese (over 30), and were then asked to score how beautiful they considered each woman.

The most attractive BMI was found to be in the middle of the "normal" range for both men and women.

Interestingly, ratings of attractiveness fell away most sharply when women were thinner than this.

The plain and simple answer is there is no such thing as the perfect figure, says Calgary facial cosmetic surgeon Dr. Kristina Zakhary.

While one person might feel fabulous at a curvaceous size 16, another woman might feel marvellous at size six.

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"When people come to me, they are trying to balance how they feel on the inside with how they look on the outside," says Zakhary. "What I deliver is a feeling.

"It's all about looking healthy. If you look healthy and confident, you feel great."

There's no doubt, though, that the celebrity obsession with beauty does have an impact on society worldwide.

Yet that might not necessarily be a bad thing, say many doctors, because it can actually help them better understand a patient's motivations.

"Even unrealistic expectations have a base in reality," says Calgary cosmetic surgeon Dr. Louis Grondin. "I simply break down the concerns into small, achievable steps.

"I like to always point out what the expected outcome will be, and if that is below what they expect, I encourage them to research other avenues to address their dissatisfaction."

More important to Grondin is the message that cosmetic procedures and surgeries should not be considered a treatment for unhappiness.

In fact, while it might appear that factors such as low self-esteem motivate many cosmetic procedures, that is not necessarily the case.

A 2007 study by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons found a person's overall level of satisfaction with his or her body has no influence on whether the person is interested in most forms of cosmetic surgery.

In the study, researchers asked people to rate their attractiveness, and measured their comfort level in a swimsuit. They found overall body satisfaction in people interested in cosmetic surgery, other than liposuction, did not differ from people who were not interested.

Grondin says beauty cannot be attributed to any specific colour, shape, size or measurement, and most people understand that.

"Many (definitions of beauty) have been proposed, largely by classic painters and sculptors, and lately by the Hollywood movie industry, but a simple sincere smile generated by happiness can change and influence an entire room," says Grondin.

As for Sharma, she's not necessarily done with her foray in cosmetic enhancements. While she has abandoned all thoughts of giving her bust a boost, she is still considering other procedures.

"I'm not exactly too happy with my nose, and if I get some extra cash, I might decide to do something about that," says Sharma.

She adds her small frame has been an irritant as well, and she is always striving to "put on a few extra pounds."

"I'm looking into that as well, if there's something I could have done, but in the meantime, I have started to become more active hoping that exercising and eating more will help out with that," says Sharma.

