

Madonna has just bought one of these £50,000 machines - so is it the miracle cure for cellulite?

Combating cellulite remains one of the foremost obsessions of British women.

It's no surprise - cellulite is an equal opportunities affliction, targeting the young and old, thin and fat, us mere mortals and famous people. (Just last week, the perfectly formed Beyonce was snapped with that tell-tale dimpling peeking out of a pair of denim shorts.)

In fact, according to market analysts Mintel, women fork out £56 million a year on dimple-destroying products.



Cellulite solved: Acoustic wave therapy is being hailed as the new cure for orange peel thighs

But the harsh truth is no cream has yet been found to obliterate cellulite. Now, however, there may be hope on the horizon. A new machine claims to be the ultimate weapon in our war against cellulite - and Madonna seems to agree, having paid a whopping £50,000 to have one installed in her home.

The Swiss-manufactured D-Actor device utilises acoustic wave therapy (AWT) to target dimples.

AWT is a procedure that has been used in the medical world for several decades to make kidney stones disintegrate and to ease joint pain.

Its skin-smoothing abilities were discovered purely by chance. While treating the joints of female athletes, doctors noticed a marked improvement in the appearance of their thighs.

Naturally, it wasn't long before the beauty world took notice. The device works by blasting problem zones with compressed air, creating rapid pulsations on the surface, while sending pressure waves to the

underlying skin where cellulite develops.

'The force of the acoustic shockwaves shatter and destroy the cellulite-causing connective fibres,' explains Esther Fieldgrass, owner of the EF MediSpa in London's Kensington, which offers this new treatment.

'The waves break down the fibrous walls to release clogged fat, water and toxins.

'The process stimulates the nerves and increases blood flow to treated areas, which produces fresh, thicker bands of collagen, as well as stronger and smoother skin.'

The treatment can be used on areas that are prone to dimples, including the bottom, thighs, arms and tummy.

But don't expect to lose weight. According to a study published on the website of Storz Medical - the Swiss manufacturer of the D-Actor machine - patients may see only a small decrease in their thigh diameter.

The ideal candidate is, therefore, a woman who already has good muscle tone, but who finds it a struggle to shift stubborn cellulite.

Besides smoothing the appearance of orange peel, AWT is showing it can tackle other body issues.

Professor Francesco Canonaco heads the 'leg school' at the exclusive Capri Palace Hotel in Italy - a retreat that is regularly visited by the likes of Gwyneth Paltrow and Liz Hurley.

Having used AWT on his patients for the past few months, Professor Canonaco has noticed wider benefits: 'We have seen great results on our guests, tightening, skin elasticity, stretch marks and general toning. It's a lasting solution.'

One of the first people in Britain to try out the new procedure is Natalie Gill, 32, an administration executive from Notting Hill, West London.

At size ten, she has always been content with her weight, but has suffered from persistent cellulite since her teenage years.

Natalie admits she has spent a fortune on creams and high-tech treatments, all of which have failed to deliver, so she was keen to try the new procedure.

'After applying an ultrasonic gel, the practitioner stroked the gun-like device over my bottom and thighs. She focused on each area for ten to 15 minutes.

'I was told that the device sends out a pressure shockwave that passes through the skin to break down the cellulite and get the lymphatic system moving.

'Once the circulation begins to flow, the broken down fat and toxins are directed to the liver, so they can leave the body naturally.



Smooth skin secret: Madonna has bought one of the machines

Peel away!

Women in the UK spend a staggering £56 million a year on anti-cellulite products

'I wouldn't say the treatment was relaxing, but it didn't hurt. It felt like a vibrating, pummelling massage. After the first 45-minute session, I noticed straight away that the texture of my skin was smoother, but the lumpiness was still there.

'I had two treatments a week, but it was only after the fourth session that the dimples on my bottom and thighs appeared a lot less prominent.

'After the sixth treatment, my bum looked pert - I'd say I feel confident to face the summer in my bikini.'