

SLIM PICKINGS

If you've tried every diet on the planet in a bid to drop a dress size, this Austrian vacuum therapy could be the answer. Trudi Brewer gets sucked in



After decades of research, I've discovered there is no quick fix when it comes to weight loss. It's a simple 'eat less, move more' equation. That said, there is something shaping up to be a panacea for busy women who want to move those extra few kilos by targeting the usual suspects such as a post-baby tummy, bulging hips and saddlebag-looking thighs.

It's the exercise-cum-treatment programme Hypoxi, which alternates high and low pressure with exercise to target those unwanted lumps and bumps. Australian general manager Ariana Hendry explains: "Hypoxi works through the simultaneous use of vacuum technology and fat-burning training, which increases blood supply to problem areas."

At the start of a session you're literally zipped into a neoprene suction suit and plugged into a vacuum chamber for 20 minutes.

"The suit is designed to imitate the ancient Chinese medicine of cupping, which has been used since the 4th century to combat the

stresses of daily life on the body," says Hendry. "The pressure chambers [little suction cups] on the suit are located around the stomach, hips, buttocks and thighs, and act in a similar way to manual cupping."

In the next part you are locked into an exercise bicycle inside a vacuum chamber, cycling in a semi-recumbent position (with legs just above your heart), flat out for 30 minutes.

"The vacuum accelerates the circulation of blood and the fatty acids transported from the problem zone are burnt off as fuel for movement," Hendry explains.

At this point I need to stress this is a serious workout, and there are rules. No alcohol on training days and no more than one coffee a day. And here's the clincher: no carbs or sugar for four to six hours after each session, so the body continues to burn fat post-treatment.

In combination with healthy eating, I lost 4kg and 17.6cm from the waist down. With firmer thighs, a flatter stomach and behind, the promise of a new winter wardrobe is looming.

HYPOXI FACTS

- It was created in 1999 by Austrian sports scientist Dr Norbert Egger while trialling vacuum technology for sports injury rehabilitation. He discovered that by combining this technology with gentle exercise, patients had better recovery results and lost inches in areas that healthy diets and regular exercise had not shifted previously.
- It's essential to do three Hypoxi sessions per week for 12 weeks to get best results.
- There is no ideal time to have Hypoxi, but it's best to look at when it's easier to eliminate carbs for the four to six hours afterwards.
- General exercise is encouraged on non-Hypoxi days to boost the results.
- Hypoxi costs start at \$690 and go up to \$1180 for 12 weeks. It is available in Auckland and Wellington.

Hypoxi trainer and nutritionist Jana Rautenberg's tips

- Beware the high sugar content of some fruits. A ripe banana is equal to 6.5 teaspoons of sugar. The lowest sugar content fruits are apricots, peaches, raspberries, strawberries and watermelons. Eat two portions of fruit and three-plus of vegetables (excluding potato, kumara, corn and avocado) every day.
- Eight pieces of salmon sushi can have over 90g of carbs. Choose sashimi and spare the carbs from the rice.
- One cup of toasted muesli can have four teaspoons of sugar. Make your own with wholegrain oats, nuts, seeds and some dried fruit, adding light yoghurt for protein.
- Nuts contain healthy fatty acids. Aim for a handful (about 10 nuts) a day.
- A small glass of alcohol contains 7kcal per 1g of alcohol – a standard drink has 10g of alcohol, so reconsider that oversized glass.
- Muscle weighs more than fat, so if you reduce your body fat and build muscle it may not show on the scales. However, your clothes will get looser and this can be a better measure of body changes than numbers on the scales.