

## MAIL TODAY

If your backside is drooping and your chin has acquired several folds, then it's time to take some action to get off the saggy track and ensure yourself a shapely future instead

BY MEGHANIEEN DUTTA LINGAM

**T**HE FAT aunty in your gym fervently running the treadmill with her flapping chest and jiggling butt might incite a chuckle or two. But, mingled with that amusement is horror. Which of us doesn't shudder at the sight of all that sagging flesh and worry about when our own bodies will start resembling hers?

Indeed, a sagging body is a cause of embarrassment to many women: We keep our wriggling thighs under wraps and dream about that D&G bikini, wear long sleeves to hide the hanging arms, walk around with our chins thrust in the air, almost as if this will prompt the layer of flesh hanging downwards to suddenly disappear.

It is often assumed that a sagging body is due to excessive fat. While fat does have something to do with the problem, loose muscles contribute even more. But since the whole focus is on slimming down, we pay no heed to maintaining our muscles.

Our bodies sag either due to excessive fat deposits that slump or excessive weight loss that leads to skin sagging. The only way we can halt the process is by building muscle. Building muscle actually burns calories and thereby helps bust the fat. If muscles are not worked, they decrease in mass, resulting in an increase in the percentage of fat in the body. Apart from reducing the fat content of the body, well-built muscle lends a taut and firm structure to the body giving it a well-defined and shapely look, and reducing the sag.

### DOUBLE TAKE

If a double chin is beginning to change the appearance of your profile, it may help you to understand why. The muscle group which spans over the lower jaw, neck and throat — *platysma* — is responsible for a number of your facial expressions. These are the muscles that you feel stiffening up if you bend your neck backwards or stretch it sideways, and extend all the way to the chest. When fat deposits get accumulated in the area surrounding the *platysma* muscle group, the skin in the chin region begins to wilt resulting, in offending double folds popularly referred to as a "double chin."

While this muscle group has to be targeted through exercises to get rid of a double chin, the challenge lies in chalking out an exercise routine that targets only this group of muscles. According to Gaurav Makkar, operations head and fitness expert, Ozone gym, there is no particular exercise during a workout that targets the chin. "Apart from chewing, there is no specific workout that builds this set of muscles. And of course chewing isn't enough active exercise for the chin," he says. Losing fat from all over the body through a balanced, nutritious daily diet and regular exercise routine is also what he recommends. Surgical methods for treating a double chin include liposuction, which is done to remove the fat deposits in the area. If the skin sags either due to weight loss or old age, a neck lift is an option to be considered.

### IFS AND BUTTS

A well-rounded and taut butt is probably on top of every woman's list of fitness goals. While every woman yearns for that dream butt, the hip zone is a problem area for many. When fat sets into the female body, it seems to attack the hips and bottom first. And Indian women are genetically more inclined to developing a loaded bottom. Added to this, child birth makes the body unwilling to let go of these fat cells.

While a sagging bottom may be part of a weighty issue, building the muscles in this area go a long way in making the mass tight and well sculpted. By busting all the fat and working those butt muscles (*glutes*) to

### CHINNY DILEMMAS



**DOING** facial exercises for a few minutes a day can help bring back the well-defined contours of your face. These exercises can also be done to prevent or even delay a double chin from appearing:

- Lean your head back and open your mouth wide, raise the lower jaw to clench your teeth. Hold the position for as long as you can and then close it slowly. You will feel the muscle on your neck contract and expand. This would help tone neck muscles.
- Another good way to exercise this region is to keep your head straight and place a

tennis ball under your chin. Now open and close your mouth. The tennis ball would create obstruction in free movement and in turn would help firm up the muscles.

- With chin raised, open and shut your mouth as though you are chewing.

- Smack the underside of your chin using the back of your hand. Increase the speed slowly. Do it twice or thrice a day.

- Keep your chin pointing upwards. Press the indentation formed by the side of your jaw bone with your middle and index fingers. At the tip of your chin press the back teeth. Press the tongue tip on the inside lower front teeth. Repeat four times.

transform a sagging bum, your sexy butt dream won't be too far fetched. These muscles are known to be the largest in the human body. The muscles of the legs and bum are in close proximity and overlap each other. Hence exercises are devised to cater to them as a whole group.

The squat, lunge and hamstring curl are a bunch of exercises great for toning and shaping the thighs, legs and butt.

Not only does it tighten and tone your rear but is also good for building lean quality muscle.

"Among these, squats are the best as they require a full contraction from the muscles. A more intense contraction helps place stress on the whole area not just on a few cells within the muscle," says Vikas Kumar Singh, fitness trainer, Powerhouse health club. This forces the butt muscle to tighten and firm up very quickly.

Since squats exercise the largest muscles of the body they burn more calories and hence the energy expended is far greater when squatting than during any other exercise," adds Singh. In fact it's possible to burn a huge amount of energy within a short span of time when the maximum potential of a squat is reached. Apart from lending a shapely sexy look, a strong lower body gives the support you need to

build the rest of your body.

Exercising is the best option, as surgically lifting the butt is an extensive and risky proposition, cosmetic surgeons say. Moreover, it leaves an ugly scar. In extreme cases, a lower body lift can be done which includes lifting abs, thighs and buttocks.

### HANGING AWAY

A woman's breasts are touted as the torch bearer of her sex appeal, which is probably why most of us are so sensitive about them! A pair of shapely, sexy boobs is believed to be one of the strongest female assets. So we are really sorry to tell you that sagging in this area is inevitable. All you can do is delay its onset to a certain extent.

Drooping of breasts is a natural, unavoidable process



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ARE YOU A SAG BAG?



Illustration ARYA PRAHARAJ

that happens to all women at some point — except those with fairly small breasts. These assets begin to head south due to the effects of gravity and plain old age.

Breasts do not have muscles, instead comprise of ligaments and connective tissue. When gravity pulls them down, those ligaments and skin can stretch, and breasts droop. This also depends on the elasticity of your skin and ligaments, which in turn is determined by your genes and diet. Since you anyway can't choose your parents, make it a point to at least choose vitamin C rich foods that increase collagen fibre in the skin. Obviously large breasts will sag easier since the gravity is pulling them down more.

**BRA BASICS**

Most women attribute sagging breasts to breastfeeding. This is only part of the contributing factor. "Unless you take the trouble to wear a proper bra

which suits your size, you will still end up with floppy boobs even if you never have any babies," says Dr Loveleena Nadir, consultant gynaecologist, Fortis hospital. While gravity is perpetually weighing down your breasts, supporting them with a bra takes prominence.

The most important phase is when a woman is pregnant. Her breasts grow several sizes larger and hence, a proper maternity bra is very important.

The most notable sagging happens after a woman stops breast feeding her baby. "Once the baby is put off mother's milk, the tissues inside the breast shrink, but the skin surrounding it doesn't. This makes the breast look 'empty' and saggy," says Dr Nadir. Over time, fat gets deposited in the breast so it looks somewhat fuller but sagging usually remains.

There are no exercises that can prevent or perk up sagging breasts, since they contain no muscle and are made up of tis-

sues and ligaments. Exercising the pectoral (chest) muscle can make the breasts sit better on the chest. This makes them settle better in place.

"A shrinking breast after child birth can be surgically corrected by silicon gel implants. These are a newer variety of cohesive implants used without the fear of gel leaking out," says Dr Sami Choudhary, HOD, aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, Max Healthcare. A breast lift, called mastopexy is suggested for those whose nipple has fallen way below its place and requires repositioning.

**FLESHY ARMS**

If the flesh on your arms hangs on them loosely, the only solution may be to get into a weight lifting routine that tones them up. Most often it is noticed that people trying to

NON SURGICAL FACE LIFTS

If you are not comfortable with the idea of coming under a scalpel here are a few non-surgical treatment options to tackle those unsightly folds under your chin.

**Microcurrent Therapy**

This face lift uses microcurrent electricity to hasten cellular repair in the skin. These currents are applied along with acupuncture at points along the face and chin. It stimulates the mus-



cles of the face and neck and is shown to increase the production of collagen and improve blood circulation in the skin. This treatment not only reduces double chin, but also lifts up jaw lines and reduces jowls.

**Thread Lift**

This is a minimally invasive procedure that aims at elevating, repositioning and lifting lax skin of the face, neck and brow. It works best on those who are not too heavy or too thin. Tiny 'cogged' threads are inserted under the skin to support the deep (subcutaneous tissue) structure of the face. Once set into place, these threads grab on to the sagging tissue and muscles of the area. These threads can now be pulled tight to get the desired appearance.

**Rejuvenating face lift**

These include chemical peels that are applied over

the face and neck. They usually contain extracts of fruits like pineapple which contains alpha hydroxy acids (AHA). Other kinds include beta hydroxy acid and retinolic acid. "They help peel off a few superficial layers of the skin and dead cells. This process induces rejuvenation of new skin," says Dr Snehal Sriram, consultant dermatologist, Kaya Skin Clinic. This makes the skin taut and firm.



**Thermage**

Thermage is a popular non-surgical facelift technique performed using a machine called the rmaCool system. It delivers radio frequency energy into the skin, uniformly heating the dermis while cooling the epidermis. This facelift is also referred



to as 'radio wave bombardment'. Radio waves break down the molecules of the top layer of the skin, sparking it to produce collagen. With time, the new skin that is created is firmer. The effects of this procedure can last a few years though results vary from person to person.

lose weight from the arms end up losing it from other areas first. Sometimes even losing weight from places they don't want to lose from. "This happens because the body draws energy from all over rather than from one specific place. Even if the arms are regularly exercised it will often first tone them up prior to burning fat in the area," says Makkar.

The problem with losing weight in the arms is caused as a result of our genetics. There are certain areas where the body tends to deposit more fat cells, and this could be one.

The best way to sculpt your arms is to attack the triceps (set of three muscles at the back of the arms). "The triceps

are least worked out and what gives the arms the sags. They make up two thirds of arm size and would be best to work more at toning them," says Singh.

On the other hand, the biceps (set of two muscles in front of the arms) get a decent amount of workout through our daily activities like lifting objects, holding the phone, stretching arms out and above to hold or place things, etc.

The curls and tricep kickbacks are a good bunch of exercises that tone the arms. These exercises place direct stress on the biceps and triceps causing the arms to firm up.

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