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MAGAZINE

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

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HAVE YOUR OWN AHA MOMENT

a practical guide to the spiritual side of life

(It's time to wake up and smell the roses!)

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REPORT

Show Some Leg!

If you're letting a few veins, blotches, and bumps stand in the way of summer's fluttery little skirts, cool shorts, and the deliciousness of warm breezes on bare skin...stop right now and read this.

We know a woman, let's call her...Betty (as in Grable). She's smart. She's stylish. She's gorgeously statuesque. When the weather turns warm, she throws off her cashmere cardigan and happily exposes her lovely arms, her graceful neck, her splendid cleavage in gossamery, deep-cut blouses. Sleeveless, she strides briskly through the world like a woman who knows where she's going, and she does.

The funny thing is: We've never seen her legs. For all we know, they could be navy blue. Or covered in silvery scales. No matter what season, her legs are sheathed in pants or concealed in tights. Even the long dog days of a New York City summer don't motivate her to liberate them. Why?

She hates them. "You don't want to see my legs," she says ruefully. "They're pale. Veiny. Bruised. Dimpled. Oh, and my knees? Heading south."

We love tough cases. So we took this one on, making it our mission to

free our friend from the shackles of her leg shame.

Since self-tanners can serve as a soft-focus light on your legs—blurring dimples, fading scars, making veins look less conspicuous—they topped our list of solutions. We tested dozens of them to come up with our favorites, and in the process figured out the best way to apply them. Then we asked doctors what they can do to make all the Bettys of the world feel better about their legs: What options are available to eliminate veins, fade bruises, and shore up saggy knees? And finally, we asked O's fashion team for clothes and strategies that will make anyone's legs look longer and leaner.

So if you, like Betty, can hardly remember the feeling of a deliciously warm summer breeze brushing against your calves, we think you might be persuaded to reveal them after you read our Complete Guide to Legs You're Proud to Bare. ▶



PROBLEM 5: Lumps & Bumps

Some dimpled thighs can be adorable (exhibit A: *at right*). But you probably don't find yourself cooing over yours. Cellulite is a fact of life for about 90 percent of us, and as of yet, there's not a lot we can do about it. "Cellulite isn't just regular shapeless fat like you might find on your stomach," says Ranella Hirsch. "In the thigh area, women have fibrous strips of tissue under the surface of the skin that create a sort of tic-tac-toe pattern. Any fat is pushed up against this grid, which is what causes dimpling."

A few high-tech machines are approved by the FDA for a temporary reduction in the appearance of cellulite (there is no indication how long results might last). The most promising at the moment are the VelaShape (which combines radiofrequency and infrared light energy, suction, and mechanical massage) and SmoothShapes (a hybrid of laser, light, massage, and suction). Most doctors say a series of treatments will noticeably smooth bumps—but consistent maintenance is necessary. VelaShape requires a touch-up every three to six months, SmoothShapes at least once a year. "You definitely have to keep going back, with no end in sight," says Heidi Waldorf, who doesn't offer the treatments in her practice for this reason. "But if your cellulite really bothers you, and you have endless time and money..." (Four weekly VelaShape sessions cost about \$2,000; a package of eight SmoothShapes treatments—the company recommends two a week for one month—runs \$2,400 to \$3,400.) Liposuction is a one-shot deal, but even this invasive procedure won't necessarily improve cellulite. "Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't, and sometimes it makes cellulite worse," says Waldorf. You can suck out some of the fat, but you



can't do anything about the fibrous bands that create dimpling. (This is also why all the squats, lunges, and leg lifts in the world won't help cellulite.)

For the time being, doctors advise staying away from any cellulite treatment that involves a needle. Mesotherapy is a catchall term for injecting who-knows-what into cellulite in an effort to liquidate it. "It's not regulated," says Francesca Fusco. Lipodissolve involves injecting a specific ingredient that has been shown to dissolve fat (in test tubes). "There have been reports of some very scary side effects, though," says Fusco. "It's promising, and some very respected doctors are conducting studies, but I wouldn't recommend it anytime soon."

Topical cellulite creams contain ingredients (usually caffeine or a derivative) that act as diuretics, removing moisture from the skin, which makes it firmer for a few hours. (So: Rub it in, get to the beach, and get back *fast*?) Some of these creams also contain retinol, which helps refine the surface of the skin and can boost collagen production. Over time retinol improves the texture of your skin (but not your cellulite). Bottom line: Practice acceptance—and find a great pair of shorts (*see right*). ■

HOW TO LOOK LEGGIER

O's fashion department has turned up the best pieces to make the most of your legs, with no danger of overexposure.



Shorts with a wider silhouette are more flattering—not to mention more comfortable—than those cut close to the leg; make sure they end below the widest part of your thigh. Too much pleating can add pounds to your midsection; these sharp, single pleats, however, lie flat and lengthen legs by drawing the eye down. Shorts, Piazza Sempione, \$400.



A full circle skirt that swirls around your legs foragingly glides over hips and thighs. This silk georgette version hits right at the knees—you won't reveal too much skin, but you'll still feel liberated. Skirt, Peter Som, \$1,150.

Keep heels under three inches to elongate your legs and make your calves seem more shapely—without any wobbling. (Warning: Steer clear of heels much daintier than these; tiny kitten heels can make calves appear chunky in comparison.) Slingbacks, Cole Haan, \$325.



A wedge is the ideal way to add leg-lengthening height...and still feel grounded. This patent leather version looks great with a knee-length skirt or dress; try a more casual espadrille style with shorts or cropped pants. Wedge, Tory Burch, \$295. For details see Shop Guide.

