

AMERICAN

HEALTH

DECEMBER 1993 \$1.95

**WOMEN'S  
HEALTH:  
Righting  
Deadly  
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## LOOKING GOOD

because the devices have a silicone shell—the National Women's Health Network suggests it's best to avoid them as well. Another option—usually limited to women who have had mastectomies—is tissue reconstruction, which uses fat and muscle from the buttocks or abdomen to build up the breast.

On the other hand, many women who've had explantation decide to go back to their original figure: "I know a number of women who've had their implants removed and they've adapted

to their changed shape quite well," says Esther Rome, who runs a Boston-based support group for women with implants. "They're much happier to no longer be worrying about their health."

Explantations are not cheap: Prices can run to well over \$5,000. But insurance companies—or in some cases the implant manufacturers themselves—may cover costs. Women considering the procedure may wish to consult an attorney; for litigation purposes, the implants should be saved,

along with the surrounding scar tissue.

For information on implants, send a check for \$5 to the National Women's Health Network, 1325 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20005.

—NANCY WARTIK

## Restoring Collagen

**C**ollagen has long been touted as a potent weapon against the appearance of aging. "In its natural form, it's vital to the support structure of the skin," says New York City dermatologist Alan Kling. "Collagen gives skin elasticity."

But exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays may significantly reduce collagen production. Researchers at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor compared patches of sun-exposed skin with protected skin (forearms vs. buttocks) and found that the photodamaged areas produced 56% less collagen than did skin that's typically covered up.

Dermatologists make up for some of this loss by injecting the substance into the skin to minimize fine lines and acne scars, but the results last only about six months. And applying collagen to the surface of the skin has no proven benefits other than moisturizing.

A more promising treatment for restoring lost collagen employs Retin-A. The Michigan researchers found that photodamaged skin treated with the acne- and wrinkle-fighting cream showed an 80% increase in collagen, whereas patches treated with a placebo cream showed a 14% collagen reduction.

But don't be lulled into thinking that Retin-A can make up for hours of unprotected sunbathing. "The fact remains," says Dr. Kling, "that the Michigan results were evident only under the microscope. The increase in collagen wasn't readily apparent to the naked eye."

—JEAN GODFREY-JUNE

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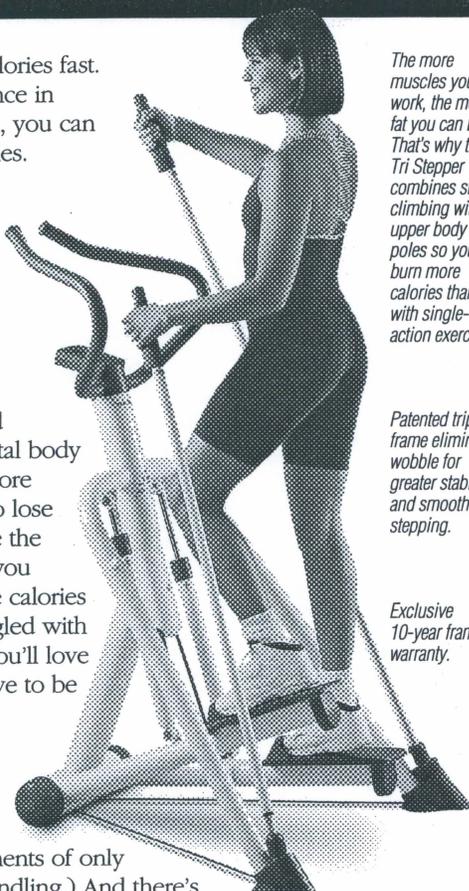
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