

When Sienna Miller was shooting *Factory Girl*, the biopic based on the life of the American socialite Edie Sedgwick, she admitted to having her cellulite masked with cover-up before going naked on camera. 'I have small boobs and cellulite,' she said, empathising with the torment of millions – then added that she would rather be 'lumpy and slightly heavy than skinny and miserable', which rather ruined it because if you really have cellulite, the lumps truly are the last thing you want.

Said to blight 90 per cent of women (and mostly those living in the Western world who tend to eat a high-fat, low-fibre diet), cellulite has no bias towards size, shape or site – it finds its way on to hips, thighs, buttocks, stomachs, arms and calves. I have even seen it on ankles. It looks awful (cripplingly so on unforgiving pale, blotchy skin), and is unlike ordinary fat not only because it looks different but also because it hurts when you press it.

Cellulite fells the best of us, and it clings on for dear life. It is a pig to control. No wonder we are obsessed, and no wonder the cellulite market is worth £56 million – £10 million more than in 2004 when Mintel started recording it. These treatments are a necessary evil – key to the committed battle we have with it. 'I have cellulite. I fight it every day,' Salma Hayek has said. She and I together.

Over the years, I have tried everything short of surgery in my efforts to outwit it. I have done the diets and the exercise regimes; worn the special pants; I have read the reports by surgeons, nutritionists and doctors – and of one in particular, Professor Francesco Canonaco, 'the Leg King'.

A paediatrician and oncologist who has studied food science, Canonaco is the man to see if you have a leg worry, medical or cosmetic, because his knowledge of lymph and vascular health and how they affect the silhouette of the leg is unrivalled. He has made it his mission to understand cellulite in its many forms (he believes that women who

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grind their teeth are more likely to have cellulite because they manifest stress in a way that affects posture and circulation). But more especially, he has created the Leg School in Capri. There is nowhere else like it in the world, and certainly not in Britain. But those who go (Gwyneth Paltrow has decorated her own suite there) do so twice a year for a week. I have been dreaming of the Leg School for a decade, and I finally got there this spring, for a three-day cellulite reboot. Capri, it appears, is a cellulite sufferers' nirvana.

Citalia offers four nights at the Capri Palace Hotel and Spa, home of the Leg School, from £555 per person based on two people sharing and including breakfast and return flights but not ferry transfers (0871-664 0253; citalia.com)

Capri, March 2009. Day one The daily routine: medicated mud applied from ankle to groin and covered in plastic, followed by a bandage wrap. Mud and bandages are steeped in a special vasoactive recipe of decongesting and detoxifying ingredients; they are freezing. So I can't actually believe it when all this is hosed off and I am then told to go outside and get in a bath of cold water. This is the Kneipp Cure, a vascular booster that involves wading, slowly, for 10 minutes, through a waist-high pool of cold water, then through a pool of warm. The tank bottoms are uneven to promote circulation via the soles of your feet. Back inside, my legs, oddly, are no longer cold, and as the specially formulated medicated cream is whipped on I notice that the cellulite on the outside of my thighs is more visible (because the skin around it is less puffy). But my knees are more defined and I can see veins in my left foot, which has been puffy for years.

Day two Canonaco prescribes two massages: lymphatic, done lightly by hand with powder rather than oil, with soft pumping movements towards lymph nodes; and pressing therapy, a mechanised massage using air-filled boots which is meant to enhance lymph flow. The first, which I barely feel, combined with a herbal drainage tea, does such a good job at releasing trapped toxins and cleansing the liver that I get a hangover. The food served also helps: we eat amberjack carpaccio, spinach-filled whole-wheat pasta, sole with fennel and crêpes; we drink the Leg School Cocktail of celery, apple, pineapple, cucumber and zucchini, and low-sodium mineral water – there are no pulses or limp lettuce in sight (take note, British spas).

Day three The 'roll' of cellulite around my outer thigh is reduced and there is a definition to the muscle that makes what lumpiness there is somehow matter less. My thighs feel firm when I wobble them with my hand, but not solid – the skin is supple, not like a lump of hard cheese. I have ankles – there is evident definition between calf and foot. But the greatest change of all is that the dough balls on the inside of my knees have gone down and I can see the outline of the bones. My legs are not free of cellulite, but they look more like they did when I was in my twenties.

London, May 2009 Most people go to the Leg School for a week; but with only three days I was more impressed with the outcome than I have been with any other treatment in 20 years of spa reviews. I have no doubt that Prof Canonaco's method is the best investment you can make for your legs, and I will be heading back to his Leg School for an annual workout. But right now we have summer to face: so for the benefit of those who can't afford Capri, or can't bring themselves

War on wobble

In the fight against cellulite, the most intensive battleground is Capri, where the man they call the Leg King promises at least a temporary victory. **Kate Shapland** joins the fray, and also suggests weapons to try closer to home. Illustrations by **Autumn Whitehurst**