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Thermage Offers Body Shaping Tx

Following the recent launch of their medium depth 3.0 cm² ThermoTip™ STC (Smoothing, Tightening, Contouring) treatment tip, skin tightening pioneer, Thermage, Inc. (Hayward, Calif.), officially entered the body shaping arena with the introduction of their 3.0 cm² ThermoTip DC (Deep Contouring), according to Bader Bellahsene, Ph.D., Thermage's vice president of research and development. "The DC tip is designed for deeper penetration for improved tightening and contouring of the body tissues," he explained.

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Thermage Enters Body Shaping Arena with New ThermoTip DC

By Lara G. Owens, Contributing Editor

Photos courtesy of Ruth Hillelson, M.D.



Neck before Tx



Neck six months after ThermoTip Tx

ThermoTip DC for body contouring is part of the ThermoCool® System, which is FDA cleared for the non-invasive treatment of wrinkles and rhytides. "The DC tip is based on our monopolar capacitive radiofrequency (RF) technology, and targets more of the subcutaneous fibrous septae," Dr. Bellahsene explained. "For body shaping applications we need to treat the tissue more deeply than if we are just smoothing or tightening skin on the face, for example. The tip electrode has been designed differently from previous tips, and this allows us to reach a penetration depth (in computer models) of 4.3 mm, which is 79% deeper than the STC tip."

Ruth Hillelson, M.D., a plastic surgeon in Virginia, is excited about the new DC tip procedure. "The 4.3 mm depth allows significant tightening of the fibrous septae. The cycle time on this tip is short, keeping treatment time down, and requiring only one treatment. Once you gain experience performing this procedure, you get significant contouring. It shouldn't require a steep learning curve." Dr. Hillelson has treated approximately 25 patients with the DC tip.



Ruth Hillelson, M.D.
Director of Plastic Surgery
and Aesthetics
American Self
Richmond, VA

Like most body shaping devices on the market, the ThermoTip DC is designed to shape areas on the body that have localized fat. The face and neck are not recommended treatment zones because the tip is designed for deep penetration. A medium depth tip such as the new

"The cycle time on this tip is short, keeping treatment time down, and requiring only one treatment."

ThermoTip STC is more suitable for these areas. Richard Asarch, M.D., a dermatologist practicing in Englewood, Colo., who was involved in the initial studies of the deep tip, sees a demand for this product. "The deep tip gives you a way to help people with a fuller shape. We've used other tips, but the benefits weren't as great as they are with the deep tip," he said.

According to Dr. Hillelson, the ThermoTip DC is for the patient with excess fat on the arms, thighs, abdomen or buttocks. "If skin laxity is the only issue, I would use the STC tip instead," she explained. "What I've noticed when contouring with the deep tip is that every patient has noticed a two inch decrease in measurements either at the waist or hip within two to three weeks of treatment. And that's with one treatment and no downtime." Dr. Hillelson's patients seem just as excited about the new procedure. "I hate to say we have a 100% patient satisfaction rate because it sounds candy coated, but it has been 95% or greater."

Other options for treating fat require several treatment sessions, according to Dr. Hillelson, which puts Thermo ahead of other technologies. "If you have someone with love handles, your options are liposuction, lipodissolve and maybe ultrasonics. Liposuction can be one treatment, but will hurt and require six weeks of downtime. Lipodissolve is multiple sessions and ultrasonic technology can require up to 15 sessions," she said. "Within the contouring market, Thermo has something special. It's tolerable for the patient, requires one treatment and with the appropriate candidate, results should be beautiful. The DC tip was a smart move."

Photos courtesy of Ruth Hillelson, M.D.



Abdomen before Tx



Abdomen immediately after Thermage Tx

"With any RF device you can have adverse effects if you don't pay attention to the principles of the treatment, but with the DC we've seen minimal to no complications," Dr. Hillelson added. "When using the new deep tip, the important things are how rapidly you repeat your pulses in the areas of greatest bulging and continuously feeling the temperature of the skin during treatment. As for post treatment, I just tell patients to wear a little compression for a week or so."

Results can be seen immediately, although to see the full benefit may take several months as collagen forms. "With this body contouring procedure, it takes three to five months to see the full result," said Dr. Asarch. I see a 1 or 2 cm circumferential reduction in the thighs and abdomen, but a few patients in the studies lost almost 7 cm, so results can be fairly dramatic. And often when people leave here and their clothes fit loosely, they forget it was a little uncomfortable. Satisfaction levels have been high."



Richard Asarch, M.D.
Dermatologist
Englewood, CO

Because the changes that patients see are gradual, Dr. Asarch recommends that physicians take photographs to show patients at follow-up visits. "People forget what they looked like six months ago." Patient expectations should be discussed, and a healthy lifestyle needs to be maintained, but according to Dr. Asarch, the contouring effect will last. "If results with these new tips are the same as I've grown to expect from Thermage, the benefits will last for

"If results with these new tips are the same as I've grown to expect from Thermage, the benefits will last for years."

years. And if patients want more improvement, we can repeat this procedure safely."

According to Dr. Bellahsene, cooling is used to protect the epidermis during treatment as with other Thermage tips. For both the STC and DC tips, the cooling parameters have been modified compared to earlier tips. This allows the energy to be delivered in a greater volume of tissue and increases the speed of treatment.

Dr. Asarch noted that the pain sensation is about the same with the DC tip, but discomfort is less than with the original tips. "Thermage started to lose popularity, especially because of the articles written about the pain. Since then, the tips have become larger, treatment time has dropped, and the procedure is less uncomfortable because it's now based on patient feedback during treatment. It's important to listen to the patient." Thermage encourages physicians to determine treatment levels according to patient feedback and leaves the use of pain medication to the discretion of the physician.

"I often use oral pain medications," explains Dr. Asarch, "but I have a good sense for safe treatment parameters also, even if they might edge on the more painful side. I would not recommend anesthesia to a novice,

however." Gregory Nikolaidis, M.D., a dermatologist in Austin, Texas, who was involved in the initial studies, offers



Gregory Nikolaidis, M.D.
Cosmetic Dermatologist
Westlake Dermatology and
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Photos courtesy of Stacy J. Davies, M.D.



Lower face before Tx



Lower face after Thermage Tx

similar options for pain management. "I have patients take Vicodin (Abbott Laboratories, Abbott Park, Ill.) or Darvocet (aaiPharma, Wilmington, N.C.), but some use only Tylenol (McNeil Pharmaceutical, Titusville, N.J.) or nothing at all," he said.

According to Dr. Nikolaidis, results and patient satisfaction with Thermage treatments seem to be on the rise. "The clinical results we see are better than we've ever seen and patients are happier than they've ever been." He attributes the effective shaping to the deeper penetration of the DC tip. "There's a good paper by E. Victor Ross, M.D., that demonstrates how the RF energy transmits through the fibrous septae of the fat. By allowing that energy to penetrate even deeper, you can get a greater contour change on the body," he said. "And as with traditional Thermage procedures, treat to the point of mild erythema and swelling and overlap your pulses. If you do that and listen to patient feedback you'll get the response you want."

"I'd say the results are comparable to what we've seen with mesotherapy, but it only requires one treatment without post-procedure pain or swelling," Dr. Nikolaidis added. "In general, Thermage's business concept of generating new tips rather than new devices is unique and a lot more cost-effective to the practitioner. Thermage is a market leader because it was the first to attempt skin tightening. I think it will become the leader in body contouring as well."



E. Victor Ross, M.D.
Director
Cosmetic and Laser
Dermatology Unit
Scripps Clinic
San Diego, CA

"I'd say the results are comparable to what we've seen with mesotherapy, but it only requires one treatment without post-procedure pain or swelling."

Stacy J. Davies, M.D., a family practitioner in Maple Valley, Wash., focuses entirely on aesthetics and is enthusiastic about the new deep tip. "The DC tip will help me to treat a wider variety of patients. Once word gets out there that we can make a difference in a poochy tummy, we'll absolutely see more patients," she said.



Stacy J. Davies, M.D.
Family Practitioner
Maple Valley, WA

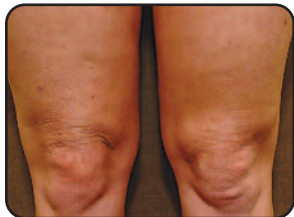
"I just got the tip last week, but the patients had a large decrease in circumferential girth by the time they left. They were very excited about

their immediate results. We've seen no adverse effects and downtime is zero," added Dr. Davies. "Thermage has come a long way from their infancy and I know I'm not the only doctor who believes in this technology and who sees lots of happy patients. Success depends on patient selection and operator technique, but the technology really works too."

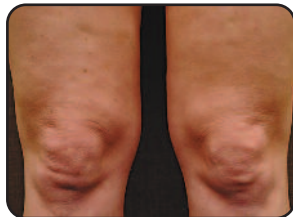
"Pain is about the same as with the earlier tips," Dr. Davies noted. "There is less time for people to adjust between pulses, but because of that, treatment time is shorter. And we treat more than 90% of our patients without medication or analgesics," she added.

Dr. Davies also sees a growing demand for this type of procedure. "I was looking for the opportunity to do more body contouring and to somehow help cellulite. I think this DC tip is going to be promising technology for patients with those concerns," she said. "ThermaTip DC is not specifically recommended for cellulite, but if we can contour the

Photos courtesy of Stacy J. Davies, M.D.



Knees before Tx



Knees after Thermage Tx

fat and tighten the skin, it's reasonable to expect that the appearance of cellulite will improve too."

Thermage's new medium depth STC tip is making a favorable impression as well, and has even caused some physicians to phase out the standard tip. "The STC is faster, which translates into profitability and patients see immediate results," said Dr. Davies.

According to Dr. Bellahsene, Thermage modified the treatment parameters of their earlier medium depth tip. "With the new parameters of the STC tip we are still protecting the epidermis, but the dermis is cooled less," he explained. "By putting more heat in the dermis, we treat more superficially and therefore achieve better and more predictable results for skin texture and wrinkles on the face and neck."

Dr. Asarch is impressed with the STC tip. "Thermage has decreased the level of cooling, so you can treat a greater volume in the upper dermis. Results are better and you see more changes immediately. I don't see a reason to use anything else but the ThermaTip STC for skin tightening." Dr. Nikolaidis agrees, "You get the benefits of the superficial tip but also the benefits of mid-dermal tightening from the standard tip. We recommend the STC tip to anyone interested in non-surgical tightening of the face and neck."

Both the ThermaTip DC and ThermaTip STC can be used with the ThermaCool platform or the newer, easier to use ThermaCool NXT™ platform launched in February 2007. The NXT platform includes newer technology, making it faster and more user-friendly, according to Dr. Bellahsene.

"Thermage is just one of those companies that continues to invest and reinvest in research and technology and that is why they've been at the forefront of skin tightening."

"RF controls are on the handpiece, making it faster and more comfortable to use," he said. Even if physicians haven't upgraded to NXT, they can still benefit from the new tips.

"My experience has been that Thermage is interested in what I think about their technology, good and bad, and they take that information back to their team so they can better give us what we want. That's how the DC tip was developed," Dr. Davies noted.

"Thermage was smart in deciding to develop tips for body contouring," said Dr. Hillelson. "Now that they've done this, they'll continue to tweak the technology and results will get even better." Dr. Nikolaidis agrees, "Thermage is just one of those companies that continues to invest and reinvest in research and technology and that is why they've been at the forefront of skin tightening. And I believe they'll soon be at the forefront of body contouring."

Photos courtesy of Gregory Nikolaidis, M.D.



Before Tx



Three months after Thermage Tx