

Meet the leg doctor of Paris: the beauty editors' best kept secret

French women know who to ask to remove unsightly veins and slim their thighs. Now he's coming to the UK.
By Bridget Harrison

Spring is coming, which means it will soon be time to dispense with the tights. Are you ready to bare your legs? If you are a client of Jean-Marc Chardonneau, Paris's most in-demand "leg doctor", the answer will be "mais oui!" When spring comes, French women turn to him to magic away every leg blemish, from those veins that make your skin look blue to that saggy bit above the knees that no amount of yoga can shift. He can slim "cankles", make thighs more slender, skin blotches vanish and stretch marks disappear.

Achieving this isn't cheap, of course — a full leg overhaul could leave little change from £15,000. Dr Chardonneau says, however, that his clients are happy to make the investment. "French women know that good legs make them look healthier, sexier and ten years younger," Dr Chardonneau says. Indeed, 89 per cent of French women think that having good legs is of huge importance, according to a survey by TNS Sofres, the country's biggest market research company. Nearly 70 per cent of French women believe that good legs will make them more attractive to the opposite sex, another survey found.

And now the leg doctor is coming to London. This month Dr Chardonneau arrives in the West End as a partner in the UK's first French medical beauty clinic, which is offering beautification the Parisian way, delivered by specialist doctors. It's the French concept of cosmetic work — transformative but oh-so discreet.

So where should one start? Dr Chardonneau, whose clients are as young as 20 but most of whom are in their forties, says that the most popular procedure is the removal of unsightly veins. That's those violet varicose ones and the tiny red spidery ones that find you staring at your leg as you ask: "Where did you suddenly come from?"

Instead of zapping varicose veins with lasers, Dr Chardonneau, who trained in vascular medicine, offers a new treatment called foam sclerotherapy (£700 a session) during which he injects a solution into the vein to push out any blood, causing it to shrink and disappear. It takes 20 min-



Dr Jean-Marc Chardonneau

utes, although you'll have to wear compression stockings for a week. Another treatment, this one pioneered by Dr Chardonneau, is phlebotherapy (£450 a session), during which he uses a special solution of sodium salicylate to regenerate the veins, rather than cutting them off (a typical strategy in the UK). "It is always better to keep a vein if you can because this is better for the circulation and your skin," he says. "This action simply reduces the diameter of the vein without destroying it."

For spidery veins, which most often appear on your outer thighs or the backs of your knees, you can opt for another procedure called veinwave (£350 a session), which heats and closes the veins, taking less than 15 minutes. Or there's microsclerotherapy (£220 a session), during which a sclerosing drug is injected with a fine

needle that causes the veins to shrivel gradually and disappear.

So that's your unwanted veins sorted. Now let's move on to those saggy bits above the knee. "The most common areas of the leg that women want to reshape are their knees and outer thighs," Dr Chardonneau says. Saggy knees can be tackled by mesotherapy (from £185 a session). This involves injecting a combination of vitamins, minerals and amino acids with a fine needle deep into the knee tissue to break down the fat and tighten the skin. Require something a little more drastic? Then it's time to fork out for some liposculpture, also known as mini-lipo, which sucks out the fat via a tiny cannula (between £1,000 and £3,000 a session). A similar process can slim down your cankles and thighs.

Dr Chardonneau says that knees, ankles



and thighs can also be tackled in a new process called cryolipolysis (a mere £800 a session), which involves controlled freezing of fat cells that the body naturally disposes of over the ensuing weeks and months. Or to get a tighter and firmer appearance for your whole leg, you could invest £450 for three sessions of radio frequency. This generates energy that causes collagen fibres to contract, encouraging new collagen to be produced.

Stretch marks and sun spots, meanwhile, can be removed by chemical peels (from £80). Or laser (£200 a session), which heats and breaks down brown spots until they disappear. And finally, there's hair removal. Dr Chardonneau uses state-of-the-art laser treatments starting at £200 for the upper leg.

So is the pain and expense worth it? Bien sûr! "After treatment, women feel so much better and consider themselves to be more

“People are waking up to the idea that surgery doesn't have to be visible

desirable,” Dr Chardonneau says. “They feel able to bare their legs, to wear short dresses and other revealing clothing that they would never have had the confidence to do before. The procedures help prevent other secondary complications, for example varicose veins developing into issues such as deep vein thrombosis and ulcers.”

The clinic is also offering Parisian-style — ie stealthy — facial work. The owner, Bernard Hayot, will be in London two days a week to give Brits the benefit of his expertise. Women — and men — travel to Paris from all over the world to see him for his speciality, *l'embellissement*. His work is famously subtle. “We call it the French touch,” Dr Hayot says. “A French woman wants to be more beautiful, but without any visible technique.”

His new clinic in Marylebone (no charge for a consultation) is called Epilium & Skin. For the work itself clients will have to travel to his medical base on the Champs-Élysées. Recovery takes days, so it's a perfect excuse to hole up in Paris for a weekend and return suddenly and subtly refreshed. One recent British patient went out for lunch in Paris the day after her treatment, albeit in dark glasses. A few days later she attended a party in London where her friends simply commented on how good her make-up was.

“People are waking up to the idea that surgery doesn't have to be visible,” Dr Hayot says. “For me the best thing is when I see my patients a few months later and they tell me people asked them if they had a new haircut. They don't see my work — and that's a win for me.”

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