



POSTPARTUM TREATMENTS FOR RESTORING SKIN AND FORM


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Aesthetic practitioners are in a unique position to help women regain their self-confidence after childbirth. Non-invasive treatments can address many common concerns and enable mothers to feel better about their appearance.

Top providers are increasingly passionate about serving this audience, a trend we see among the leading aesthetic clinics in more than 60 countries that partner with Venus Concept.

Aesthetic practitioners want to support mothers as they juggle more demands than ever before, and it makes good business sense, too, as this demographic is stable or growing in many countries. (For example, the number of women in the United States who are having children is now up significantly after a decade of decline.¹)

In this report, we will look at the common aesthetic conditions experienced by postpartum women and the treatments that can help them, as well as special considerations and insights for working with this clientele.

¹ Livingston, Gretchen (2018, Jan 18) . "They're Waiting Longer, but U.S. Women Today More Likely to Have Children Than a Decade Ago," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/18/theyre-waiting-longer-but-u-s-women-today-more-likely-to-have-children-than-a-decade-ago/>



75%

OF AMERICAN WOMEN AT NORMAL WEIGHT WHEN THEY BECAME PREGNANT WERE HEAVIER A YEAR POSTPARTUM

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

The physical changes of pregnancy and childbirth can be dramatic and long-lasting.

A standard recommendation is for women to return to their pre-pregnancy weight within a year after gaining 25 to 35 pounds during pregnancy.² But a study found that 75 percent of American women at normal weight when they became pregnant were heavier a year postpartum with almost half being more than 10 pounds heavier than their pre-pregnancy weight.³

Here are some other typical changes that many women experience:

- Fat deposits in the abdomen, flanks, and hips
- Lax skin around the abdomen
- Stretched and/or separated abdominal muscles
- Laxity in vaginal tissue that decreases sensation and sexual satisfaction, and permanent widening of the vagina in women who have a vaginal birth⁴
- Breast deflation after weaning from nursing
- Irreversible sagging or ptosis of the breasts due

to stretching of skin and ligaments that hold fatty tissue in place⁵

- Stretch marks on the abdomen, buttocks, and thighs that are pink, red, or—when chronic—white
- Cellulite related to hormonal and weight fluctuations
- Scars from caesarean sections, which typically are horizontal lines about six inches long when healed
- Melasma, characterized by a discoloration or darkening of the skin usually on the face, triggered by hormonal changes that may lighten with time but not go away completely
- Acne flare-ups due to hormonal changes that may persist or worsen for some women after the immediate postpartum period
- Spider veins on the face due to hormonal changes and increased blood volume during pregnancy

² "Weight Gain During Pregnancy," Committee Opinion No. 54, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *Obstet. Gynecol* 2013;121:210-2

³ Endres L, et al. Postpartum Weight Retention Risk Factors and Relationship to Obesity at 1 Year. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 2014.

⁴ "Vagina Changes After Childbirth," U.K. National Health Service, <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/vagina-changes-after-childbirth/>

⁵ Brian Rinker, Melissa Veneracion, Catherine P. Walsh, The Effect of Breastfeeding on Breast Aesthetics, *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, Volume 28, Issue 5, September 2008, Pages 534–537, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asj.2008.07.004>



THEY WANT
TO FEEL
CONFIDENT

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POSTPARTUM WOMEN

Most women find the cumulative effect of these changes psychologically difficult. Research has shown that self-esteem suffers during pregnancy and the early years of motherhood, with mothers of three-year-olds reporting the lowest self-esteem.⁶

Many factors affect self-esteem among expectant and postpartum mothers, but poor body image is a commonly expressed dissatisfaction.

Bouncing back to pre-pregnancy shape through lifestyle changes alone is an unrealistic objective for many women, given how stubborn some of the unwanted physical effects of child-bearing are and how little time for self-care mothers of young children have. Many women feel demoralized by unattainable

images of #fitmoms and celebrities on social media who regain seemingly perfect bodies overnight after giving birth.

Moreover, years of too little sleep during pregnancy, infancy, and toddlerhood—compounded when second and third children are born—can take a toll on a woman's youthful appearance, and moms often feel depleted by caring for everyone in their lives but themselves.

"Women want to look restored and just get things back to where they were. They want to feel confident," explains Melissa Doft, clinical assistant professor at Weill Cornell Medical College.⁷

⁶ van Scheppingen, M. A., Denissen, J. J. A., Chung, J. M., Tambs, K., & Bleidorn, W. (2017, May 28). Self-Esteem and Relationship Satisfaction during the Transition to Motherhood. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000156>

⁷ Hertzog, Alyssa. (2016, Dec. 28) "The New Mommy Makeover." *Harpers Bazaar*. <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/beauty/health/news/a19587/postpartum-plastic-surgery/>



MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN PREFER NON-INVASIVE AESTHETIC THERAPIES

These factors have spurred interest among postpartum women in non-invasive aesthetic therapies, and practitioners say they are good candidates for these procedures, which can achieve strong results while fitting the needs and desires of this demographic.

In general, women today prefer aesthetic treatments that involve little to no downtime or discomfort. Non-invasive and minimally invasive therapies are usually better for postpartum women and mothers of young children than surgical procedures for several reasons:

- Women in these groups are especially strapped for time because of the intensive hands-on care that infants and toddlers require, especially if a mother is breastfeeding. These mothers are usually unable to take time off for recovery from invasive elective procedures.
- Mothers of small children often have limits on disposable income as young families face

significant expenses, such as home purchases and childcare as well as reduced earnings if a parent takes time off to be at home with little ones. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), invasive “mommy makeover” surgery, including breast and abdominal procedures, can cost up to \$20,000⁸, which is money that many mothers simply can't justify spending.

- Women who are contemplating having additional children are discouraged from cosmetic surgical procedures, since results will be reversed by future pregnancies.

For those wanting dramatic results or to treat problems that non-invasive procedures cannot address, such as decreased breast size, surgical options are available. These include abdominoplasty, commonly called a tummy tuck, or a breast lift and breast augmentation.

⁸ Knotts, Christopher MD, (2017, July 19) “Mommy Makeover – How Much Does It Cost?,” American Society of Plastic Surgeons, <https://www.plasticsurgery.org/news/blog/mommy-makeover-how-much-does-it-cost>



TOP TREATMENTS FOR SIGNIFICANT POST-BABY RESULTS

Fortunately, aesthetic providers have excellent non-invasive therapies to offer, and innovation continues to deliver treatment advances.

Here are some of the most popular non-invasive procedures for postpartum women and the problems they address.

SKIN LAXITY

Therapies such as radio frequency (RF), particularly Multi-Polar RF, combined with Pulsed Electro Magnetic Fields can improve the appearance of skin laxity on the body, including the abdomen, by delivering energy to deeper layers of the skin to stimulate collagen and elastin production. These procedures have a superior safety profile, entail no downtime, and can typically be performed in as little as a half hour. Multiple treatments may be needed for optimal results.

CELLULITE

Radio frequency is considered one of the most effective non-invasive technologies for cellulite reduction. The energy penetrates more deeply than laser and targets the connective tissue of subcutaneous adipose tissue.⁹ This smooths the bumps and dimpling caused by cellulite in the buttocks and thighs. A series of treatments is often advised.

⁹ Emilia del Pino M, Rosado RH, Azuela A, et al. Effect of controlled volumetric tissue heating with radiofrequency on cellulite and the subcutaneous tissue of the buttocks and thighs. *J Drugs Dermatol.* 2006;5(8):714–722

SPIDER VEINS

Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) and pulsed dye laser are popular treatments for addressing spider veins, though many providers prefer IPL because the devices are more versatile and equally effective.¹⁰ IPL heats the veins, causing the vein walls to collapse. The body absorbs the veins over time and the veins disappear. The procedure generally takes 15 to 20 minutes with no downtime. Repeat procedures may be needed.

STRETCH MARKS

Fractional radio frequency has been proven effective in reducing stretch marks, notably the whitened linear scars that are the chronic form of stretch marks.¹¹ Research shows significant decreases in length, width, and surface area of stretch marks after three RF treatments spread over 12 weeks along with treatment-induced collagen and elastin production.

SCAR REDUCTION

Fractional radio frequency and lasers are also effective treatments for remodeling of scar tissue, including caesarean scars. Platelet-rich plasma, steroid injections, or microneedling are also sometimes added for enhanced results.¹²



BODY CONTOURING

Many women who are close to their ideal weight after having a baby still retain stubborn pockets of fat in the abdomen, flanks, and hips. Non-invasive body contouring with RF is safe and effective for all skin tones (since RF technology is proven to be safe for all skin tones) and takes less than a half-hour per session. Other options include cryolipolysis, laser, red light therapy, and ultrasound.

MELASMA, ACNE, AND ACNE SCARS

For women who still suffer from hormonal acne more than a few months after giving birth, a range of treatments are available, including topicals and peels. Eight to 10 sessions of IPL, especially including different wavelengths such as blue light targeting bacteria and red light aimed at inflammation, yield good outcomes. Fractional RF resurfacing also works to improve the appearance of scarring from acne or trauma, uneven texture, enlarged pores, and pigmentation. Lasers may also be used. Melasma is similarly treated with topicals, lasers, IPL, chemical peels, and microdermabrasion.

VAGINAL LAXITY

Radio frequency and lasers offer feminine health rejuvenation by generating heat that stimulates collagen production. RF can also achieve labia skin tightening and mons pubis reduction. Research has shown treatment can improve lubrication, sensitivity, and elasticity.¹³ Procedures are generally quick, usually under 15 minutes, and very comfortable. A series of three to four treatments is usually recommended.

¹⁰ Tanghetti E. Split-face randomized treatment of facial telangiectasia comparing pulsed dye laser and a new optimized light handpiece. *Lasers Surg Med.* 2011;43:922

¹¹ Pongsrihadulchai N, Chalermchai T, Ophaswongse S, Pongsawat S, Udompataikul M. An efficacy and safety of nanofractional radiofrequency for the treatment of striae alba. *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology.* 2016

¹² Berry, Carolyn MD, "Scar Treatment," (2014, May 1), *Aesthetics Journal.* <https://aestheticsjournal.com/feature/scar-treatment>

¹³ Karcher, C., & Sadick, N. (2016). Vaginal rejuvenation using energy-based devices. *International journal of women's dermatology*, 2(3), 85–88. doi:10.1016/j.ijwd.2016.05.003



WHEN TO TREAT COSMETIC CONCERNS IN POSTPARTUM WOMEN

It's important for postpartum women to get clearance from their primary care provider before undergoing aesthetic procedures.

Many aesthetic practitioners prefer new mothers wait three to six months after giving birth for their health to stabilize, depending on the treatment, and sometimes until after finishing breastfeeding.

For body contouring procedures, aesthetic practitioners recommend women be close to their pre-pregnancy weight before treatment.¹⁴

As you have seen, there are many options to help postpartum women regain their self-confidence. If you have any questions about the treatments outlined or the most capital-efficient way to begin offering these procedures, we are pleased to help.

**CONTACT VENUS CONCEPT
AT 888.907.0115 OR VISIT
VENUSCONCEPT.COM.**

¹⁴ Bido, Tatiana (2018, Jan. 2) "Here Are the Post-Baby Treatments That Help Celeb Moms Get Back in Shape," New Beauty. <https://www.newbeauty.com/hottopic/slideshow/2794-best-post-baby-body-cosmetic-treatments/3/>