

Cellulite Alert!

By Selene Yeager, Prevention

Cellulite doesn't discriminate. It can show up on girls in their teens—or younger. That's because, despite what you've heard about cellulite being some mysterious condition linked to "trapped toxins" or poor circulation, cellulite is simply old-fashioned fat. It just looks different because of how it's arranged.

Everyone has strands of connective tissue that separate fat cells into compartments and connect fat to skin. In women, these fibers form a honeycomb-shaped pattern, so any increase of fat tends to bulge out like stuffing in a mattress. You see less cellulite in men because their fibers run horizontally, forming a criss-cross pattern that prevents bulging or dimpling.

Though cellulite can pop up any time, it is true that cellulite does seem to appear out of nowhere and gets worse with age. That's because our tissues change. Those strands of connective tissue thicken with age, and our skin gets thinner, making cellulite more noticeable. More importantly, we gain fat with age. The average woman loses 5 lb of muscle and replaces it with about 15 lb of fat every decade of her adult life, says *Prevention* advisor Wayne Westcott, PhD.

"Because fat is exceptionally soft, it doesn't keep our skin taut like muscle does. It also takes up more space, so it bulges out," he explains.

With the right exercise plan, you can reduce your cellulite and make your lower body look smoother and firmer. The trick is working all your lower body muscles from every angle, reducing the underlying fat stores and replacing lost muscle tissue to give the area a taut, toned appearance throughout.