

## BEST BODY » LOVE IT

and not overeat or that we have enough money to go to gyms and buy healthy foods," she says.

Professor Marika Tiggemann, a body image expert from the School of Psychology at Flinders University, agrees that access to food and a perceived ability to employ self-control help to drive body shape trends. "In a very general global way, when food is scarce, people tend to value a plumper body. So a thinner frame tends to be valued when food is plentiful."

Given all the talk about an obesity epidemic and rising instances of chronic illness, it's no surprise skinny jeans fill your wardrobe and the only place you can find a pair of bootlegs is Vinnie's.

And there's no denying the influence of celebrity culture. "From Marilyn Monroe and her coveted hourglass figure to Kate Moss and the rise of gaunt, heroin chic, the celebrity of the moment plays a huge part in shaping the current trend in body shapes," says Darianne Donnelly, director of plus size modelling agency BGM Models.

"The direction fashion takes is inextricably linked with the current celebrity and the immediate environment – they all feed off each other to create an overarching body shape trend that young people aspire to."

### A fine line

The line between idealisation and obsession is fine for many women. While we're all guilty of wishing our bodies away at one

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time or another, some of us will happily laugh off unfashionable hips while others will pursue a new shape through diets, surgery or, at the very least, visual clothing tricks.

According to Tiggemann, many of us read significant meaning into body size and shape, which can trigger extreme behaviour.

"For example, for people who are overweight, there's a lot of stereotyping that goes with that, such as they're lazy and lacking in self-control," she says. "Conversely, we associate being thin with being in control, disciplined and morally superior. So it is something more fundamental in the way people make judgements than doing your hair and putting on make-up."

For some of us, the pressure to fit in is simply too strong. "Sometimes the external or personal pressure to conform is too strong to be swayed by common sense," says Donnelly. "When you are continually faced with a particular ideal of beauty, it's very hard not to succumb unless you have a strong community

around you, encouraging you to focus on acceptance and health over trends."

Donnelly says lack of support from friends and family, an acrimonious experience related to appearance and poor role models can all make a person more susceptible to outside pressures and cause them to equate their value with a particular shape. "Unless you have the strength and determination to accept the skin you're in, you'll always be vulnerable to the ideal weight or look or shape," she says.

### Zero comparison

Body shape trends may come and go faster than *American Idol* winners, but there's no escaping the fact that unless you resort to extreme measures like cosmetic surgery (see below), there's very little you can do to change what Mother Nature gave you. It sounds like something your mum would say, but the secret really is to love the skin you're in – or disguise it if you must.

In fact, research has found that the less we compare



# CHANGING SHAPE

COSMETIC SURGEONS ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF CHANGING BODY SHAPES, SO WE CHATTED WITH DR SARA MULLEN AND DR GAVIN CHAN FROM THE VICTORIAN COSMETIC INSTITUTE ABOUT TRENDS, TUSHES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

### What are the major drivers of body shape trends?

Dr Mullen: What's going on in Hollywood certainly influences what's on trend when it comes to desired body types. A good example is Kim Kardashian bringing the booty back. Ever since the media applauded her curves, Brazilian butt lifts have been very popular. With that said, we advocate proportion, not what's on trend per se. Universally, the hourglass is the most aesthetically

pleasing female shape, so we recommend balancing all enhancements so when unified, an hourglass form is achieved. For example, if you are pear shaped, larger breasts may be a better enhancement option as opposed to a larger rear.

Dr Chan: Today, we celebrate the hourglass figure like we did back in the 1950s and 1960s more than we did a decade ago. Shapely breasts

ourselves to media images and other women, the better our psychological health and body image. "If we could look at other people without doing that comparison of ourselves, we'd be better off psychologically," says Tiggemann. "You can do this by consciously not doing it. Another thing is to shift your dimensions in which you compare, so only compare yourself to others on things that you're good at rather than appearance."

Cameron says clever use of colour and shape can create the illusion of a slightly different shape. Think belts to create a defined waist, less skinny jeans for less skinny legs and necklines to suit your bust size.

Donnelly agrees: "Dress for your shape, find what flatters your figure and shift your focus to light exercise, a healthy diet and pursuing your passions. You are not defined by your shape, your look or what you wear, but by what you create for yourself in this life. So just get out there and start living!"



and buttocks have been made very popular with celebrities like Beyonce and television shows like *Mad Men*.

#### What are the most popular body shape procedures?

Dr Chan: Increased awareness around liposuction as a safe and effective method of reducing fat deposits from areas of the body that cannot be corrected with diet and exercise has made it increasingly popular over the years. A woman's breasts form some of the most important and attractive aesthetic lines of her body, which is why breast augmentation is still one of the most frequently

performed cosmetic procedures of all time. Fat transfers – using your own body fat to enhance other areas of the body – are becoming more and more common as a means of body and facial sculpting.

#### What are some of the ethical considerations of changing your body shape?

Dr Mullen: If the patient's aim in having the procedure is to feel better about themselves and increase their self-esteem, then I believe there are no ethical implications to having the procedure. When a patient's expectations are healthy and realistic, they gain more confidence and self-esteem from having their

procedure. This can only be a positive thing.

#### How do you counsel patients prior to a procedure?

Dr Mullen: First we have to ascertain whether the procedure the patient wants is right for them and whether their expectations are realistic. Once it is decided that the patient is a good candidate and that their expectations are reasonable, we take them through the procedure each step of the way and counsel them on what results to expect and the recovery process. Beauty is very individual; however, we always try to educate our patients on the benefits of natural-looking treatments.

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