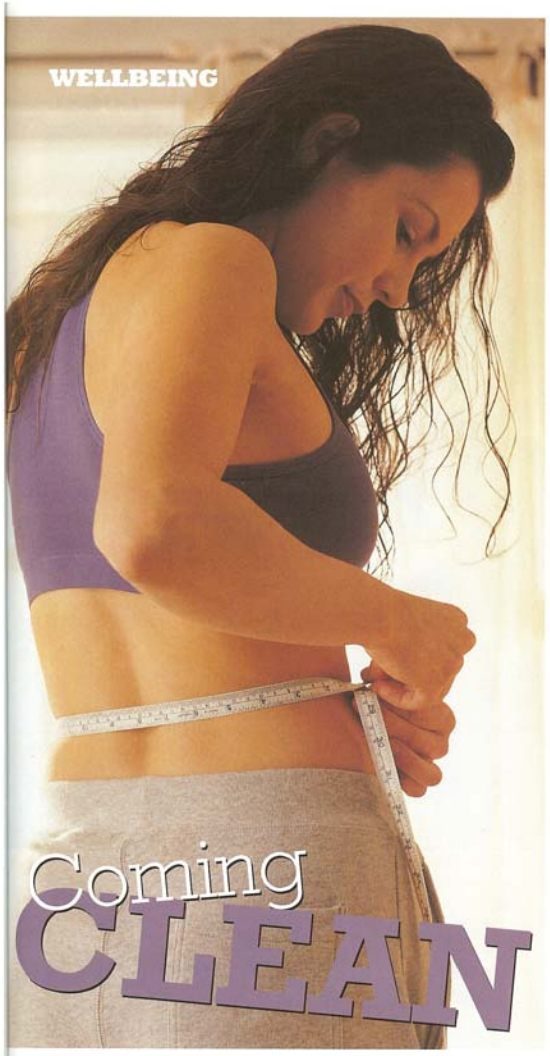

Coming CLEAN

Fancy beating the bulge, ditching some inches and feeling fresh inside and out? **Mary Webb** discovers the ultimate in detoxification at Chiswick's re-aqua

I've done some challenging things in the name of journalism: rock-climbing; motor racing; public speaking... However none has tested my courage as much as my recent mission to Chiswick's re-aqua beauty salon to experience the very latest in comprehensive detoxification and immediate inch loss. Much though I love visiting this haven of health-inducing pampering, this time I'd committed to researching two particular treatments that sounded just a little scary: the BodyBoutique Aromatherapy Detox Wrap and – a first for me – colonic irrigation. Before you shriek in sympathy, my trepidation was totally unjustified and the wonderful results of both have had me kicking myself that I never tried them before!

Re-aqua combines the best in traditional therapies with the very latest in new beauty technology – administered by some of the friendliest staff in the business. That's a very important element when you're fearfully surrendering your unadorned body to tape measures and mirrors, as I did for the Detox Wrap; but my therapist Charline could not have been more kind, pragmatic and reassuring, banishing my embarrassment in seconds. As she said: 'We all have bits of us we're not happy with and everyone thinks they're worse than they really are – but just wait and see how good you'll feel afterwards!'

Unlike other 'wraps' you might have read about, the BodyBoutique Aromatherapy Detox Wrap promotes inch loss not of water, but toxins. Because of this, it's superb for cellulite and conditions such as eczema and psoriasis, improving not only shape but also skin tone. The effects are immediate, measurable and lasting; for optimum results, a course of four over six to eight weeks is recommended.

Once we'd got our consultation and the ticklish business of the measuring tape out of the way (measurements are taken from ankle to shoulders to monitor subsequent inch loss), Charline started to apply the specially impregnated bandages. These are infused with Bentonite clay derived from natural volcanic ash and rich oils including fennel, juniperberry, almond, cypress, rose and Vitamin E. This mask penetrates deep into the skin, drawing toxins from fat cells and activating the body's lymphatic system to expel them.

As Charline skilfully wrapped me from top to toe I began to feel gloriously scented and cosy, getting cosier still as she settled me on the couch tucked up in insulating foil and towels. Despite feeling like a cross between the Creature from the Crypt and an aromatic Christmas turkey, I drifted off into relaxed bliss, aided by my decision to enjoy an indulgent facial as the wrap got to work!

One refreshing hour later, I was released from foil and bandages and the tape reappeared. There was a whopping 10 inches less of me all round, a welcome five of them from that pesky midriff/hip region. I could feel the difference in the fit of my clothes, the texture of my skin was glorious and that night I had my best sleep in ages.

Later that week I was back for the bottom line: colonic. One's digestive system is not the easiest subject to broach (you know what the British are like about bottoms) but we all might be a bit healthier if we did: statistics relating to conditions such as IBS and bowel cancer do not make cheering reading.

As my therapist Bridgit pointed out, nervous tension has a massive impact on digestion and, sadly, our fast-paced world means stress levels are rising. We are, perforce, much more aware of the importance of diet to good health, not to mention the problems of food intolerances and accumulation of toxins from a nutrient-poor modern diet, inadequately digested. Colonic hydrotherapy can transform your inner wellbeing, easing the crippling symptoms of IBS and identifying other digestive health issues. In fact, as Bridgit told me, it's been practised since around 1500BC, so it's pretty tried and tested – though I'm pleased to say the space-age sterile equipment used at re-aqua is of rather more modern invention!

Bracing myself with the thought of the noble deed I was doing, bravely reporting back for all tempted but terrified would-be clients out there, I entered Bridgit's intimate consulting room. There fascination took over as she explained the process – not least of all fascination at her choosing to specialise in this. The answer was simple: 'I do it because I personally know just how

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well it works and it's wonderful to have my clients telling me *they* feel so much better afterwards!'

And it's remarkably easy; any discomfort is minimal and your modesty is preserved at all times. Bridgit is gentle, skilled and reassuring and unbelievingly I found myself chatting and laughing with her throughout the hour's session. Body temperature, purified water is filtered in through a tube – a strange sensation but only slightly uncomfortable – then filtered out, giving your innards a spring clean like none other. A gentle stomach massage aids the process and, as the treatment progressed, I surprised myself by beginning to feel relaxed and, yes, *cleansed*.

Clients can experience some fleeting stomach cramps; I didn't, nor yet any unpleasant sensations afterwards. One treatment provides immediate benefit but the really spectacular results come after a second or third, with the body freed of accumulated toxins and the digestive system given the boost required to function at full strength. You can feel energised or tired afterwards; for me it was tiredness, but of a pleasant, sleepy kind. And undoubtedly relief from the bloating that'd been plaguing me, plus pride that I'd actually tried a therapy I'd been curious about for years!

Like any detox treatment, both of these require a bit of good sense by participants to maximise results, most importantly the consumption of plenty of water in the days afterwards. Your therapists will advise you on other 'dos and don'ts', including some excellent tips on dietary supplements to maintain your newly detoxinated state. One week on, I feel energised, lighter and chuffed to bits by the compliments I've received on how well I look. Now everyone knows the reason why...

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Members of the friendly re-aqua team: (left to right) Charline, Hanna, Riana, Kim, Bridgit and Swee