



carbohydrates for four hours (tricky) or do any other form of cardiovascular exercise (no arguments there).

I complete 12 sessions over four weeks and discover at my final weigh-in that I've lost 6.8 centimetres from my lower body region, and two kilograms. The bum-bags I couldn't shift have shrunk, and I'm having fantasies about playing volleyball in my bikini. I can't believe I've had such great results with such minimal effort. I can only put it down to the Hypoxi, two jogs a week and cutting out a few carbs.

Ariana Hendry, the managing director of Hypoxi Australia, isn't surprised. She had impressive results when she discovered it as a lawyer in London, losing 33 centimetres from the lower half of her body. Upon her

SEALED SECTION

Getting the spin on the latest fitness trend.

Words: Sigourney Cantelo

You'd think I'd have learnt by now that it's never a good idea to compare yourself to models. They are the giraffes of humanity: rare, elite and highly evolved to reach the tallest and hardest-to-reach branches of fashion. It's best viewing them as the beautiful genetic freaks that they are. But, for some reason, I forgot this on a recent trip to the beach. Near my towel was a group of svelte young things, including models (I recognised them from their agency cards on the wall in our office), playing volleyball. As they jumped about in their bikinis I looked from my gelatinous thighs to the firm flanks of the coltish 16-year-olds. Panic hit me like a volleyball to the head. I covered my stomach with the nearest modesty-saver – a tattered straw hat – and promised to do something drastic. It was the straw hat that broke the camel's back.

That Monday, after some frantic Googling and a flurry of emails, I booked myself in for a Hypoxi treatment, which combines gentle exercise with vacuum technology to target hard-to-shift pockets of fat. Hypoxi has been making waves in the UK and is taking off in Australia, with 45 treatment centres nationally. The beauty of it is that it requires

very little physical exertion, just gentle cycling for 30 minutes, three times a week.

After the pint-sized Trish measures and weighs me before my first session, she sets my program based on skin tone, muscle tone and circulation. Then I'm given a neoprene "skirt" to wear over my workout gear, and I climb into a reclining exercise bike. The skirt clips into the capsule, sealing in your lower half. As you cycle, air is vacuumed in and out of the chamber, increasing blood flow to your tummy, bottom and thighs, which aids in the transportation of fatty acids and helps metabolise fat. As I cycle, I catch up on emails or relive old *Sex and the City* episodes, all while barely breaking a sweat. Although there are moments when I have to grip the sides of the machine so it doesn't swallow me whole, it's really quite painless. I walk out feeling energetic and light, and a bit like my lower half has been in a tumble-dryer. After the session I'm not supposed to consume any

return to Sydney, she and her sister Anthea secured the distribution rights to Hypoxi and haven't looked back.

Chatting to some of the Hypoxi addicts sweating it out beside me during my sessions, there were more stories like Hendry's, but does the science stack up? Exercise physiologist Dr Jarrod Meerkin from Body Composition Australia, who uses DEXA imaging scans to analyse weight loss and composition, says that he has seen good results in clients who have done Hypoxi but can't say whether it's due to the fact that they're exercising three times a week and monitoring their diet or if it's a side-effect of vacuum pressure. However, he adds that there are plenty of positive reports and, given his experience with it, he wouldn't have any reservations recommending it as a way to lose weight. "Give it a try! Anything that gets people moving, dieting

and doing exercise is a good thing," says Meerkin. Indeed. And with that in mind, I'm off to volleyball lessons. The bikini may have to wait, though.

Hypoxi sessions cost approximately \$69 each. Visit www.hypoxi.com.au.



The circulation-boosting Hypoxi exercise chamber.