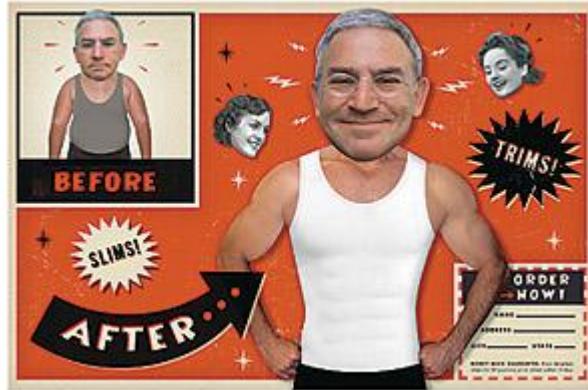


Spanx for Men

By JOSH QUITTNER Monday, Jul. 13, 2009

Time's Josh Quittner "Before" and "After"

Illustration by John Ueland for TIME



I've got the hair of a lion, calves like a dancer's and a pretty decent tush. But, sadly, I have the stomach of an old Israeli tank commander. My gut is big and getting bigger. When I try to control it with exercise and diet, it recedes briefly, then reappears, laughing and taunting, bigger than ever. I despair. Nothing works.

I know a woman--let's call her "my wife"--who swears by Spanx, special "body shaping" undergarments that magically hide her modest bulges. These New Age girdles are hugely popular with many women, but Spanx for dudes? I'd rather get a stomach staple. ([See pictures of the latest mancessories.](#))

Then last week, a company called Equmen (short for "equality for men" and no relation to Spanx) sent me an undershirt that promised to compress my core and give me a "more tailored look." It's aimed at guys and features something called "helix mapping" technology, which is supposed to make you not only look better but also feel better, more supported through your torso and shoulders. The Australian company enlisted a physical therapist to help design the shirt's helix cross-stitching, which simulates the kind of taping a guy might get if he had a back injury.

I winched myself into the tiny garment and immediately felt sleeker. I ran to admire myself in a mirror. Not bad! But stuffed into that white tank top, I looked like a giant Weisswurst. So I slipped on a shirt and sashayed in front of my spouse, hoping she'd notice my smaller belly. "You shaved a month off the last trimester," she said, in that hard way of women who have been married for 21 years.

Equmen, having tested the waters in England last winter, is taking its line of Core Precision Undershirts to stores in the U.S. I called Equmen co-founder Corie Chung and asked about her target audience. I noticed that in the company's promotional material, the models did not look like me. For one thing, they were models. For another, they were skinny models. "I have a massive gut," I overshared.

"We're really not encouraging massive guts," Chung admitted, noting that the undershirt is "really designed to give an average-size man a more streamlined look." Still, she claimed, the shirt can squeeze three inches off your belly. To trim more, she added, "we have a gray garment that provides 15% more compression." I am for more compression. Way more compression.

This fall the company will expand its lineup to include precision underpants. Yes, go ahead and reread that. Chung said the underpants will feature similar compression technology, which sounds kind of painful. But fear not, she assured me. They are designed to keep men comfortable and keep their precision parts cooler. "That area of a man is meant to be 1° colder than the rest of the body to optimize fertility," she said. Fertility is not my problem, I said. "It'll also give you a perkier rear end," she said. I agreed to test a sample in September.

As for the shirt, I love it--it's comfortable and wicks away sweat--and I'd wear one all the time if not for its \$89 price tag, the cheapest in the line. It's given me a whole new appreciation for my wife's underwear, though lately I've started to obsess about my thighs. I'm thinking manny hose.