

Curse of the mummy!

... or what happened when we tried out the new (and rather messy) fad for home beauty wraps

MY FRIEND Gordana and I are in her bathroom covered in cold, clammy clay. Gordana looks like a grumpy, professional mud wrestler while I resemble a stout Channel swimmer covered in goose fat.

We are about as far from looking glamorous as it is possible to be. Yet we are wrapped up like brides of Frankenstein in a bid to get spa-beautiful on a fraction of the budget.

More precisely, we are attempting to do a 'home body wrap'.

Body wrapping claims to detox, firm and tone the body and, best of all, produce the miracle of 'instant inch loss'.

Celebrities swear by it as a quick fix to get into that tight, red-carpet dress. But go to a professional beauty spa and you'll have to shell out as much as £100 for a professional treatment.

As I discovered, however, you can now buy a home body wrap for a fraction of the salon price. And with the austerity measures biting and the Christmas party season upon us, the sale of home treatment packs is booming.

The question is — do they work? And, more importantly, with all that messy clay and all those soggy bandages — just how easy are they to apply at home?

The premise is that a clay-based solution is applied to the skin and then the body is firmly bandaged for 45-60 minutes while the treat-

ment takes effect. The clay acts like a giant poultice to draw out toxins, while the stretchy bandages compress the soft tissues, which improves the look of cellulite and results in a leaner outline (hence the inch loss). The results are supposed to last for 30 days.

There are several home treatments advertised on the internet. 'Say goodbye to cellulite,' screams one. 'Wrap up and discover a slimmer you' promises another. It all sounds grand.

Gordana opts for the Pure Body: Spa Body Wrap (£39.95, mybeautysecrets.co.uk), while I pump for the Sanctuary Trim and Tone Body Wrap (£24.99, thesanctuary.co.uk and Boots).

Each pack includes a measuring tape and an exfoliating mitt along with the bandages and clay. We leave the bandages to soak in warm water while we carefully measure ourselves at different points, making sure to mark each place with a pen. Then we exfoliate furiously to remove dead skin cells and allow the clay to penetrate more deeply.

Next, we apply clay all over our bodies. Mineral-rich clay has been used on the skin for hundreds of years. Cleopatra reputedly used clay from the River Nile as a beauty aid, though with all those slaves at her beck and call, I doubt she ever had to struggle with a DIY body wrap like Gordana and I.

Finally, we bandage ourselves with a firm, even pressure as per



Shrink yourself thin: Amanda, left, and her friend Gordana aim to say goodbye to cellulite

the instructions. It all goes well until we reach our arms. At that point we drop the bandages repeatedly, swear quite a lot, and have to help each other out.

It is physically impossible to bandage your own arms and shoulders — try it. (Hot tip — if you're determined to bandage your bingo wings, have an assistant on standby.)

After 20 minutes we are, finally, wrapped from head-to-toe like a couple of Egyptian mummies. My bandages are rather lumpy, and I don't look at all like the neat picture in the instruction booklet.

What's more, my right forearm turns crimson and begins to pulsate alarmingly. This is due, no doubt, to our amateurish bandaging technique.

So how does it compare to the beauty salon experience? We missed the luxurious, pampered feeling that you get from a posh spa. It wasn't remotely relaxing to slather oneself in gunk while standing on a plastic sheet and then do battle with the bandages.

And it is rather messy — I leave a grey smear, like a snail, wherever I wander. However, on the plus side it is a convenient time-saver and there was no therapist with whip-lash thighs to sneer at our battered middle-aged bodies.

Careful measuring shows that Gordana has lost 1cm from each thigh and 2cm from her hips — a total of 4cm — while I have lost a total of 3.5cm. I suppose it could just make all the difference in being able to slip into that too-tight pair of jeans.

So would we do it all again? It's a thumbs-up from Gordana, who thought her skin was softer and her thighs felt smoother and more toned. 'I'd definitely use a home body wrap on my lower body to prepare for my summer holiday,' she says.

As for me, I'm not planning to repeat the experience. Being a low-maintenance type, it just seemed like too much mess and bother. I prefer to rely on diet and exercise to keep my thighs in trim (with a trusty pair of magic pants on standby for emergencies).

The results for our upper bodies were inconclusive. To be fair, I suspect that our bandaging was

Who knew?

BODY wraps were invented in the U.S. in 1961, but it wasn't until the Seventies when they were demonstrated on a talk show that they became popular