

Strength in beauty
Olympian Sarah Robles
talks self-confidence

Flaunt your curves
Embracing the full
body photo

The perfect fit
Top tips for finding
the right bra

**MEDIA
PLANET**

September 2012

FULL FIGURED FASHION

YOU DESERVE FASHION NOW

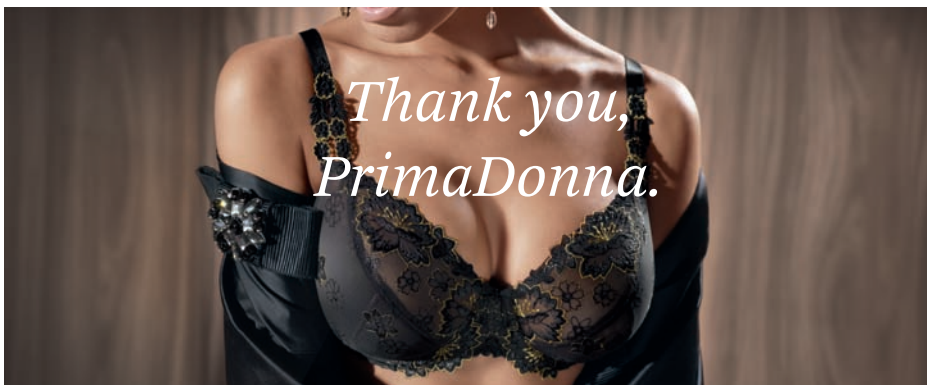
Academy Award winner **Mo’Nique**
talks about the magic of life, and
falling in love with the woman in
the mirror.

PHOTO RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO BELOW: JESSICA SIMPSON



“Beauty is personal to everyone.
It is about accepting who you are
on the inside and finding a way
to share that with the world.”

—**Jessica Simpson**



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CHALLENGES

Confident, with a commanding presence and a demand for fashion, **today's ideal of the plus size woman has evolved.**



Calling all full figured fashionistas

Over the past few years, a shift has taken place in the plus size fashion world. Designers, bloggers, and consumers alike have noticed it, felt it, and reaped the benefits of it. Those who helped create this shift are at the forefront, holding the hands of their sisters, standing atop the mountaintops, and embracing those who move with haste.

You see, this shift is not the noticeable change in sales of plus size fashion, not the increased presence of plus size women in advertising, and not the commercialism of a once forgotten industry. It is bigger than that.

A new generation

No longer, does she require permission to exist, she defies stereotypes, and she challenges the status quo. She is no longer silent or complacent. She is no longer waiting for someone to take notice; she commands it, through

both her pocketbook and physical presence.

The plus size woman embraces fashion. She takes risks, demands more from designers and retailers, and refuses to hide her voluptuous frame. The plus size woman is CONFIDENT. She embraces her curves, fashionably educates herself, and speaks up for those who are still on this path to self-actualization.

The days where she would just accept what definition society painted her to be? Those days are growing fewer and fewer, and the fashion industry has taken note. The plus size woman does not sit idly by, as fashion parades past her. She is curious. She is empowered. She welcomes fashion. She creates fashion. She is YOU.

Celebrate YOU

Today, YOU have a voice and a presence. You have industry leaders knocking down doors, challenging the stereotypes, and creating safe spaces that allow you to BE, just as you are. Social media connects you to like-minded



Marie Denée
The Curvy Fashionista

"The plus size woman embraces fashion. She takes risks, demands more from designers and retailers, and refuses to hide her voluptuous frame."

women who command respect, crave fashion, and challenge your ideals of beauty. The plus size community has beautifully evolved, showing the beauty of the plus size woman, celebrating the diversity of a woman, and taking its rightful place among its peers; painting a new picture of YOU, the plus size woman.

With all that has changed over

the past ten years within the plus size community and the mainstream fashion industry, you NOW have options, brands, designers, and retailers that see you, hear you, and know who you are! Through this evolution of the plus size community, you need to know that through this shift, it is okay to celebrate who you are. It is okay to indulge in fashion and trends!

Be bold

You no longer need permission to celebrate your being! No longer do you have to wait until you "lose a few pounds" to realize your beauty. You need not hang your head low. You do not have to wait for a special occasion to fashion your voluptuous frame. Celebrate who YOU are today! You deserve it!

Go ahead and be bold, be daring, and BE YOU! Do not wait for someone to give you permission to be the amazing woman you are, YOU deserve it, TODAY!

MARIE DENEÉ

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WE RECOMMEND



Whitney Thompson:
Falls hottest fashion trends

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NEWS



DON'T MISS

**Susan Moses**

Celebrity Stylist,
Sonsi.com Contributor

This fall is all about beautiful, rich textures and substantial seasonal fabrics. Think classic elegance and chic sophistication. Here are some of my favorite fall looks for full figured women.

The illustrious pantsuit

Reinvented each season, this fall look for this classic in beautiful jewel tones and modern layered ensembles. For a fuller figure, opt for a cropped jacket paired with a trouser flared-leg to create a waistline, or go head-to-toe in a monochromatic jewel tone, which gives the appearance of a longer silhouette.

The classic sheath dress

Made famous by Jackie O., this season's sheaths are bold, yet demure, featuring hemlines at the knee and below to elongate curvy figures. Pair with a cropped leather jacket and booties or an edgy look or a cardigan and broach for a more classic style.

The military-inspired jacket

This fall's military-inspired outerwear focuses on textures and detailing. Look for wool, croc embossed leather trim and epaulettes. Strong and structured, these styles offer balance to curvy bodies. For fuller hips, choose styles with flat or no hip pockets; the same applies to breast pockets for a fuller bust.

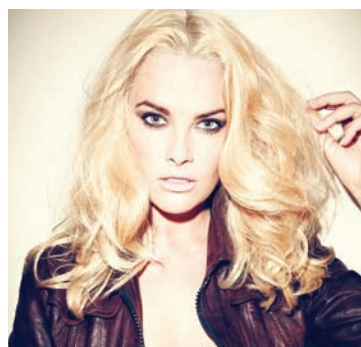
The retro peplum

Reining supreme on runways, peplum has also been given the royal nod by Kate Middleton. Feminine and ultra-flattering for fuller figures, look for styles that create a waistline. Add a wide belt if you are fuller in the waist, and pair with a knee-length pencil or straight skirt for an elongated, sophisticated look.

SUSAN MOSES

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FALL TRENDS YOU'LL WANT TO WEAR

**Whitney Thompson**

Winner, America's Next Top Model

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Layering will be everyone's focus this fall. One thing to remember is that the layers must compliment your curves, instead of adding bulk.

Stick to angled tops in light fabrics, creating height while drawing attention to your lovely (now legging-clad) legs. Wearing delicate jewelry in warm colors will elongate your frame and draw attention toward your décolletage.

Sweat is nothing new after sweltering

summers, but mix that with thicker fall fabrics and you've got bacteria building, causing serious odor. Fortunately, manufacturers are beginning to create anti-microbial fabrics that fight bacteria and keep you smelling fresh all day!

Remember, your curves are beautiful and we want to make sure that they accentuated in all the right places!

WHITNEY THOMPSON

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NEWS



INSIGHT

Todd Albaum, plus size style guru, on dressing for your shape

Most plus size women agree, shopping can be very frustrating and oftentimes, overwhelming. And with a lack of consistency from designers, there's a lot of confusion about sizes, cuts and fabrics.

However, understanding your body type and how to overcome your unique fit challenges can make all the difference. Today, there are fashion-forward looks whether you're an apple, pear, reverse triangle, hourglass or rectangle.

It's important to recognize what will, and what will not compliment your curves. Keep in mind, no two figures or women are exactly alike. With a man's eye, I appreciate those differences.

I focus on teaching women that when proportion and proper fit come together, it changes the way you feel about yourself, and fashion. This empowers you to feel beautiful and confident, no matter where you shop!

TODD ALBAUM
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THE POWER OF A FULL BODY PHOTO



CONFIDENT CREW

From Left: PassionJonesz, Nadia Aboulhoshn, Samantha Morris, Rosie Mercado, Jessica Kane and Kari Hansbarger representing the Full Body Photo Project.

PHOTO: STANLEY DEBAS

■ **Question:** Tired of women fretting over their bodies?

■ **Answer:** So was Jessica Kane, who created The Full Body Project.

Jessica Kane, founder of plus size digital magazine Skorch, encouraged women to start posting full body photos on her blog lifeandstyleofjessica.com.

"No one likes to take full body shots, they

focus on the face," recalled Kane who had battled with her image for years until she ditched crash diets and embraced her curves.

"There's so much pressure to be perfect. I feel it is time to just love yourself and for



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NEWS

women to feel they are beautiful no matter what size," said Kane who calls herself a 'confidence crusader.'

Interest was so strong, she created The



BEAUTIFUL BODIES

Top: Rosie Mercado, star of the show "Curvy Girls" and Jessica Kane, creator of the Full Body Photo Project and publisher of Skorch Magazine showing confidence is the best accessory.

Bottom: Skorch Magazine editor & YouTube star Passion Jones posing for celebrity photographer Stanley Debas.

PHOTO: STANLEY DEBAS

Full Body Photo Project, a 'join and win' promotion. The groundbreaking campaign inspired more than 2,000 women to upload their images and, an excess of 32 plus size retailers and companies such as Lane Bryant, MadisonPlus, Torrid, OneStopPlus and Ulla Popken, joined the campaign presenting more than \$5,000 in prizes.

"The second I was informed of it, I knew I not only wanted to be a part of it, but needed to be a part of it," said fashion blogger and model Nadia Aboulhosn. "The more body acceptance is talked about, the more it will be accepted in society."

Kane will kick off a similar campaign this fall backed by the support of companies who like the direct access to the nation's plus-size women. "Consumers are savvy," she said. "Bloggers are so important because people trust family and friends and I am connecting to them like a friend," Kane explained, adding that those who court this audience develop consumers.

Her blog, contests, magazine and other efforts have given women confidence, but Kane thinks there's more opportunity for retailers to expand selections for women who wear plus sizes.

A big part of Kane's success is her passion and drive. The child of a teenage mother and absentee father who dealt with abuse and neglect, she started her business in 2008 with a goal of "fighting to build strong women."

FAYE BROOKMAN

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↓ BEST TIPS



Brittany Gibbons
Editor of Curvy Girl Guide

DRESSES

■ **Old Rule:** Dresses are not flattering for plus size women.

■ **Rule Rewrite:** Dresses can be one of the most flattering silhouettes for curvy shapes.

Dresses are a big must-have for every plus size woman this fall. From shirtdresses to casual jersey knit dresses, the looks are endless.

BELTS

■ **Old Rule:** Plus size women should forgo using a belt to accessorize.

■ **Rule Rewrite:** Belts can actually be the most flattering accessory by creating a waistline and adding style impact. Belts can be a curvy girl's best friend. Use a thick belt to balance your shape and create a waist on the smallest part of your body, which for many women, is just below the bust.



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BRITTANY GIBBONS

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NEWS



DON'T MISS!

Ellen Jacobson, President of Elila, shares her top tips on intimates

A few good bras go a long way. Get three!

- **One to wear...** sexy, supportive and not too tight.
- **One to wash...** not too hot, not too cold...just right.
- **One to rest...** 'cuz we all need a little shut eye at night.

ELLEN JACOBSON

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A new way to size up bras: Universal cup sizing

According to several top lingerie retailers, the average American bra size is now a 36DD vs. a 36C about a decade ago. As the size and demand for larger bras continues to increase, so does the confusion over what size to actually buy.

Did you know that three different bra sizes—38E, 38F and 38DDD—can all be the same cup size? While some bra cup sizing is universal across all bra brands, bras larger than D cup are not. Most women do not realize there is a difference and will shop only for

bras in a specific letter size, limiting the selection they can choose from and setting them up to buy bras that likely won't fit.

How it works

As the founder of HerRoom, a leading online retailer of women's intimate apparel, I am excited to share that the confusion for full-figured and full-busted women is over



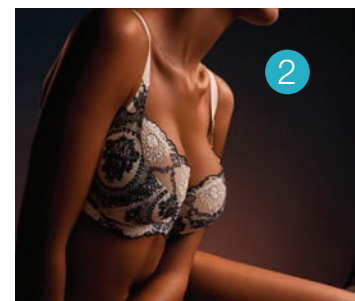
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with the introduction to Universal Cup Sizing (UCS). UCS groups cup sizes larger than a D into one letter and one number for over 150 brands (i.e. D1, D2, D3, and more). Once a woman knows her UCS, she can shop by simply looking for this size rather than wondering or worrying about what letter a brand has given her cup size.

Universal Cup Sizing allows women to choose an appropriate bra and cup size, offers a broader selection of bras and omits the dreadful return process.

TOMIMA EDMARK

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Jessica Simpson
WOMAN

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INSPIRATION

Question: How do athletically built women embrace their physique?

Answer: For Olympian Sarah Robles, the highest ranked weightlifter in the U.S., it's all about confidence and loving her body for what it can do.



Raising the bar for plus size fashion

Once self-conscious, Robles found sports gave her the confidence to love her body.

"I still get frustrated about myself sometimes just like any person but, I decided it's a wasted emotion. I'd rather be happy. I often say to others, 'Why do you care what that person thinks? You're

probably never even going to see him/her again.' Have fun and live your life," Robles said after arriving in London for the Olympics.

She realizes her figure might not attract as many sponsors as the minuscule gymnasts or ripped swimmers. "You can get that sponsorship if you're a super-built guy or a girl who looks good in a bikini. But not if you're a girl who is built like a guy."

Arriving in London, Robles



Sarah Robles
Weightlifter Sarah Robles lifts hopes at the 2012 Olympics.
PHOTO: USOC

blogged about her excitement to get Olympic apparel. "It was slightly frustrating because I went in thinking there wasn't going to be anything that fit properly. Surprisingly though, they had some Nike and some Ralph Lauren clothes up to their version of 4Xs."

Robles said that despite the emotional hardships she endured because of her physique, she never tried a crazy diet.

"I encourage people to love themselves and to love others. If you do those things, the world will be a better place. Feeling good about your body and loving it for what it can do. I may look like this, but I'm in the Olympics because of the way I am," Robles said.

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PANEL OF EXPERTS

	<p>Yuliya Raquel Founder, Designer and Creative Director, IGI GI</p> 	<p>Debbie Martin Senior Vice President, Design and Trend, Lane Bryant</p> 	<p>Liesbeth Van de Velde Brand Design Manager, PrimaDonna</p> 
<p>Question 1: What is one fashion piece that every woman needs this season?</p>	<p>I recommend a curve defining and versatile day-to-evening dress that reflects a trend one likes every season. Color blocking is hot in the fall, and it is playful and fun.</p>	<p>We are on a cycle with color and print being important — not only on the top, but on the bottom, as well. Pants and denim continue to be updated with new colors, but look new and fresh in printed versions.</p>	<p>Invest in good-fitting bras. They feel great, and do wonders for your figure. And yet 70 percent of women wear the wrong bra! To find your perfect style and size, you need professional advice in a lingerie store dedicated to bra fitting.</p>
<p>Question 2: What aspect is most important when designing lingerie for women with curves?</p>	<p>Designing for women with curves includes three important aspects. First is knowledge of different shapes that women come in. Second is creating a balance and harmony in a silhouette. And third is fit.</p>	<p>To understand how trends can be interpreted for her. The key is to accentuate the curves and areas of her body that she loves to show off. She wants to feel confident, and most of all, fashion right.</p>	<p>A woman with a larger cup size needs support, quality, and comfort more than anything. But, that does not mean she has to wear ugly, grandma-style underwear.</p>
<p>Question 3: How has the plus size industry evolved?</p>	<p>Plus size industry has greatly evolved over the years from humble beginnings of pure merchandizing without any regard to the day's trends in fashion. It is now relevant and au courant.</p>	<p>Retailers are realizing that at least 40 percent of American women are size 14 or above. More retailers are offering either extended sizes to their existing line, or creating a plus size line of its own.</p>	<p>More and more (young) women have a larger cup size. They often feel frustrated seeing beautiful lingerie women with smaller breasts are wearing. Finally they can wear gorgeous lingerie that fits great.</p>

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INSIGHT



YOUR SIZE DOESN'T DETERMINE YOUR FUTURE

To label Rosie Mercado simply as a plus size Latina model is an understatement; not only is she a celebrity make-up artist, actress, radio personality, host, community philanthropist, and a single mother of three, she is also today's antithesis to models half her size and a role model for plus-size women all over the globe.

Never let mainstream media's definition of what it means to be plus-sized ever stop you from pursuing your passions, no matter what they are!

Reaching new limits

How we achieve happiness can be different for each and every one of us. Our passions, expectations, life experiences, and even our personalities all contribute to the level of happiness we choose to have. We must stop listening to what others have to say, and affirm who we are each and every moment.

Attract happiness into your life by finding who you are, and finding what your purpose is about! Your journey starts here. Dare to live your life to the fullest, and I guarantee you will find a love of

life like never before. This is what helped me find my purpose, even in the darkest moments, when my size was never accepted nor celebrated. The moment I stopped listening to everyone else, I started pursuing my dreams of becoming a plus size model. When everyone said no I dared to say YES!

Did you know that the absence of goals in our lives makes us feel like we are unproductive, unworthy and ineffective? The pursuit of goals in our personal lives gives us a sense of meaning. It is the difference between having a mediocre life, or a life full of passion and enthusiasm. Pursue your goals, and watch how much you start enjoying life.

Growing up I was always involved in radio, television, and red carpet events. These were the toughest moments in my life,

because I dealt with rejection, fear and discrimination due to my size. With tears in my eyes, I ran. I hid from my dreams for years. I knew in my heart that I had the talents, but my fear of rejection was greater because of other people's opinions. I held myself back. This was the worst I could do, let others dictate my future when I had all the answers in my hands. I decided to stop the nonsense, and break the barriers and views of beauty.

I choose to live a life with purpose, inspiration and integrity each day. I hold the keys to my destiny!

ROSIE MERCADO

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INSPIRATION

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■ Question: Are there celebrities who are not afraid to be themselves no matter their size?

■ Answer: Yes! Actress and comedienne Mo'Nique is a successful full-figured woman leading a new mindset about curves.

"Life propels me. It's such a gift. I'm excited about the magic of life. That's what motivates me," says Mo'Nique, the multi-media powerhouse whose talents span across stand-up comedy, television, film, and literature. Today, she is using her famous voice

to urge women to discover and embrace their inner beauty, especially at a time when Hollywood is once again embracing full-figured women — once considered the most beautiful in the world.

Anyone who has caught even a glimpse of one of Mo'Nique's shows or appearances knows that she is a woman who not only exudes talent, but also radiates confidence. She encourages women of all sizes to be confident and wear what makes them happy. "If I put on my really cute workout pants and matching shoes, you can't tell me nothin'," she says, noting her refusal to



MO'NIQUE
PHOTO: DEREK BLANKS

accept illusions created by fashion magazines. "I am not going to do anything to destroy me," she says.

Monique's role as an influential voice and role model for her overwhelming fan-base of voluptuous women led her to share her personal experiences and perspectives in her 2003 book, *Skinny Women are Evil*. She later went on to produce and host Mo'Nique's F.A.T. Chance in 2005, America's first full-figured reality beauty pageant, which aired on the Oxygen channel.

Today, Mo'Nique is busy producing and hosting *The Mo'Nique*

Show which airs on Black Entertainment Television and serves as a judgment-free platform where guests educate and entertain audiences.

While she believes that fashion plays a big part in one's confidence, Mo'Nique believes in inner beauty, and being inspired by one's own self. "I took off all my clothes, stood in the mirror, and got familiar with me," she reflects. "I am going to fall so in love with that woman in the mirror. Make that mirror your best friend," she encourages all women.

FAYE BROOKMAN

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INSPIRATION



Jessica Simpson
Singer, actress, and designer
PHOTO BELOW: JESSICA SIMPSON

Jessica Simpson: Sharing your Beauty

■ **Question:** What is your favorite current fashion trend?

■ **Answer:** All summer long, and throughout my pregnancy, I lived in long flowing maxis and kaftans. They are comfortable, chic and versatile.

■ **Q:** What is your mission with the new Jessica Simpson plus size line? What inspired you to start a plus size line?

■ **A:** It's always been a priority of mine that the Jessica Simpson Collection be accessible for women of all shapes and sizes. Adding plus sizes to the

collection was important — your shape doesn't define who you are.

■ **Q:** In your opinion, what assets define a person's beauty?

■ **A:** Beauty is personal to everyone. It is about accepting who you are on the inside and finding a way to share that with the world.

■ **Q:** How can fashion inspire self-confidence?

■ **A:** Getting dressed should be fun! It's a great way to experiment with your own creativity.

■ **Q:** How would you encourage women to embrace the skin they're in?

■ **A:** Be true to yourself, embrace your strengths and be confident.

■ **Q:** What fashion trends do you recommend to women who want to flaunt their curves?

■ **A:** Blazers are a simple way to add shape to your look and a wrap dress is always elegant and feminine.

NELLY NITRAM

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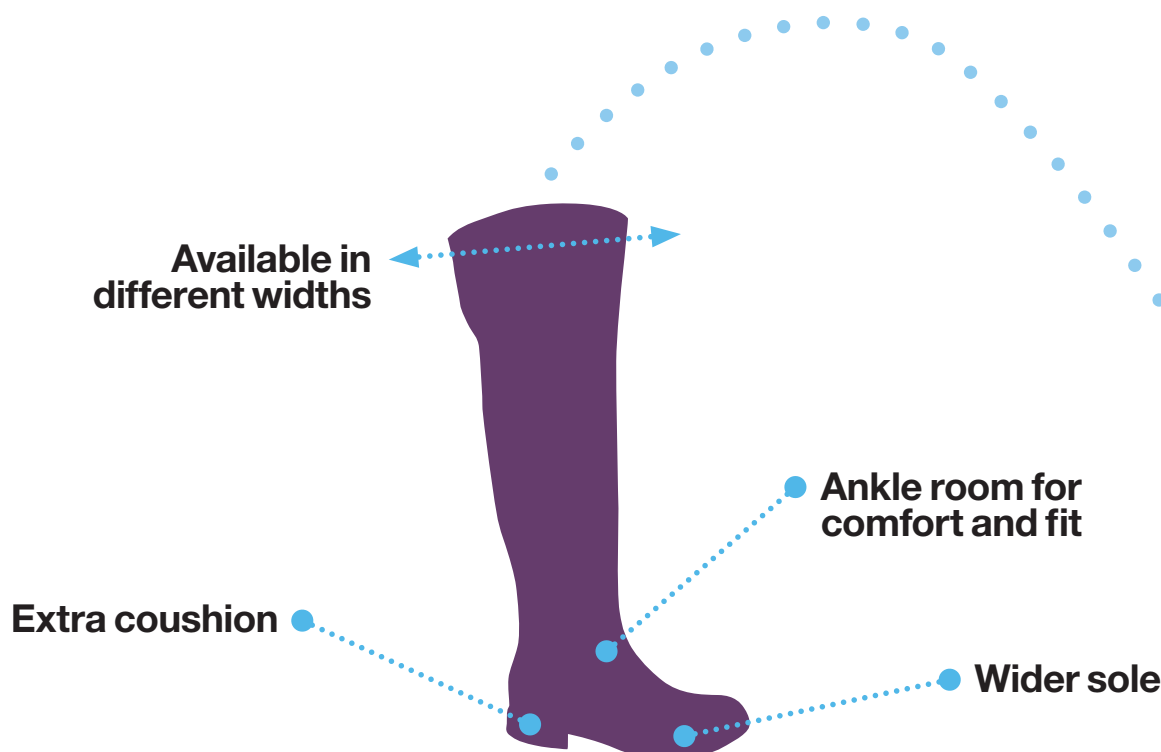


INSPIRATION

CURVY CALVES

The search for the perfect fall boot

Footwear guru Amanda Bennetts talks curves, confidence, and finding the perfect fit.

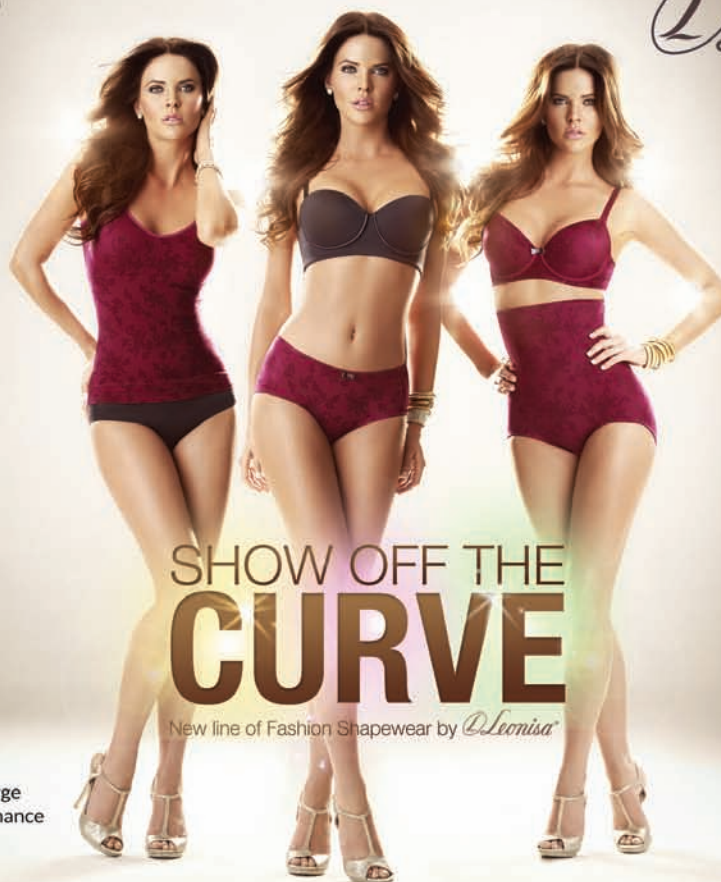


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INSPIRATION

For many women, having curvy calves is an issue when buying boots. Thick calves are a mixture of muscle and fat that can be grouped three ways — an excessive accumulation of fat; thickening due to both fat and muscle; and finally, an excess of muscle alone.

As cave dwellers the women were much more physical than most of us are today and they also had to deal with famine and heavy activity. To deal with the lack of food, fat deposits were developed in our thighs and hips so we would have the extra calories required to feed our babies. The exercise built the muscle. Over time this developed genes that have been passed down through the generations.

Environmental factors over the years also make it more likely that a people from a particular area will have thicker legs. For example many Korean women have thick calves which it is attributed to the mountainous terrain. Customs also can play a part. Bennetts Boots research into the Japanese boot market found there is a huge amount of Japanese women who need wide calved boots. It was explained the Japanese custom of sitting on their legs makes their calves wider. This is very different to the perception of skinny legged Japanese women.

It is possible to get thick calves through too much exercise. The curvy woman working out at the gym and dropping a few dress sizes may find that her calves stay the same width. I wouldn't worry too much, it's best to be fit and healthy, plus there are thousands of websites where men from across the globe chat about how much they like a woman with curvy legs.

High heeled shoes can also increase calf size. Wearing heels and standing for a long time

can stimulate the production of muscle. Over time it can crush and shorten the soleus muscle which will cause the calf to bulge out. It should be noted it is the curves the heels create, that attracts the man's eye. Some careers that can attribute to thick calves are stewardess, teachers and shop assistants, or any job where you are on your feet all day in high heels.

What's sexier: thick or thin?

Well it's really in the eye of the beholder and what the culture you were brought up in believes. In Australia and many western countries, being ultra-thin has been the fashion since the famous model Twiggy (Lesley Lawson) from the early 60s. Prior to this it was all about boobs and bums like Marilyn Monroe. There are cultures around the world that have the polar opposite perception of beauty. Like Mauritania in West Africa where the bigger you are, the more beautiful you are. The average 5 foot tall woman weighs over 99kg. Oprah Winfrey was the first to tell me about this country where the men must be thin, the women fat and the divorcee is more attractive because they have experience. Perception is about perspective or as famously echoed throughout the years, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

One thing that seems true across all areas, the healthy, happy and confident woman is always attractive. If you feel good, you look good, so feel good today.

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