



Mum Karen Gorton (47) of Christchurch spent \$55,000 buying a flashy sports car, then spent another \$27,000 changing her body to match

weeklypeople
BODYWORK

As I waited at the traffic lights in my new bright red sports car, I could see people glancing at it, admiring its sleek lines and sexy shape.

I should have been sitting proudly in the driver's seat, with my sunglasses on and the hood down, enjoying the beautiful day.

Instead, I was huddled inside with the hood firmly up, hoping onlookers didn't catch a glimpse of the chubby, frumpy woman at the wheel.

I bought the car, a Volvo C70, for \$55,000 as a treat after the business I owned – a nursing agency – started doing really well.

The only thing was, at 120kg and a size 22, I was hardly the image of a sports-car owner, and my new toy made it even more obvious I had to do something about the way I looked.

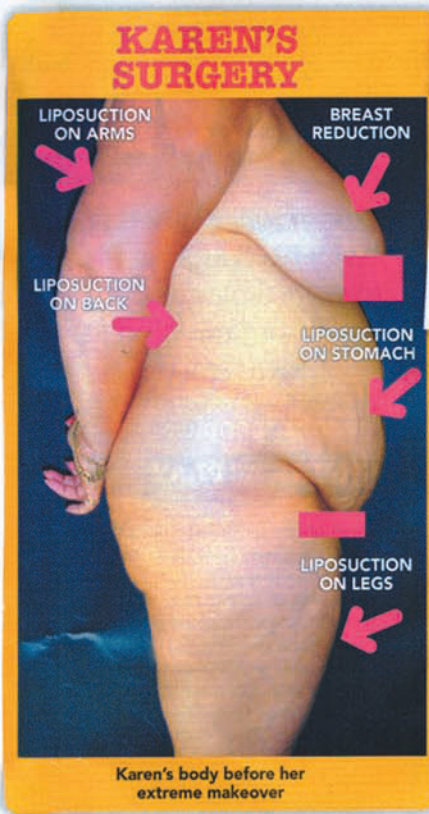
"What am I thinking?" I grumbled to myself. "Sports cars are for skinny, sexy people. I just looked silly driving it around. I've got a fat, ugly, repulsive body."

It wasn't just strangers looking at me that I was afraid of.

Every night at home I would dive into bed and pull the covers right up to my chin to make sure every part of me was covered, before wiggling out of my clothes and into my pyjamas.

I didn't want my husband Roy to see what I saw when I looked at myself naked in the mirror. I was so ashamed. How had I let myself get this out of shape?

'MY RACY EXTREME MAKEOVER'



Karen's body before her extreme makeover

For years, I had tried every diet under the sun but got nowhere. The kilos had piled on after I had my children, even though I didn't snack between meals and was active with the kids all day.

It made me feel so depressed. I used to be really social but I stopped going out. If I couldn't avoid an outing I just sat in a corner, hoping nobody noticed me.

Years later, at the beginning of 2006, I was watching a dietician on TV and she explained a really simple food-swap diet, such as low-fat spread instead of butter, and brown bread instead of white.

Even with those minor changes, I started losing weight. By now, the kids had grown up and left home, my business was thriving and I was enjoying free time with Roy.

"It's time to look after myself now," I thought. At that point I didn't even consider surgery, but I felt something was missing.

That's when I treated myself to a brand-new bright red convertible sports car. I hoped the big splurge would make me feel great, but it had the opposite effect. I felt even worse about myself than I had before.

Once again it was the TV that gave me the idea of surgery. I was watching one



of those makeover programs and thought, "I could do that! I can afford it now and I deserve it."

At first I didn't tell Roy. I knew he would try to talk me out of it so I did some phoning around when he wasn't at home.

I was really nervous but plucked up enough courage to book a consultation with cosmetic surgeon Howard Klein. The news was mixed.

"You need to lose more weight before we can do the surgery," he told me.

However, with a goal in mind, I found it easy to drop the last few kilos. Six weeks later, I was back in Dr Klein's office, now weighing just 89kg. This time I was excited and had many

questions to ask.

Dr Klein was honest and told me I would still have stretchmarks and, because of my age, my skin would probably never be tight. He reassured me he would do his best and I trusted him.

I decided to have liposuction on my stomach, legs, back and arms, as well as a breast reduction to take my size 44J bust down to a size 36C.

I told Roy that night, and thankfully he was supportive.

On the morning of my surgery, I was really calm. Roy took me to the hospital in Christchurch. "It's not too late to back out," he whispered as I checked in. But there was no way I was changing my mind. I was high on adrenaline and felt the happiest I had for years.

"You stay here," I said to Roy. "I don't want you to come in with me." Despite the weight loss I was still ashamed of my body.

Waking up after the surgery felt

amazing. I was in a euphoric state and felt absolutely no pain. Sliding my hands slowly over my body I stopped at my breasts.

"Oh, I look like a boy," I joked. "Roy will kill me." But he loved the changes and how they made me feel.

I lost more weight through the surgery. I don't weigh myself any more but I went from a size 22, before my diet and surgery, to a size 14.

It's not just my body that has changed – it's my whole attitude. It feels like I have been given a second chance to become the person I want to be.

Now, I wear bright clothes and I want to get into acting. I don't sit in the corner at parties any more because now I want to be noticed. And best of all, when I go out in my sports car on a sunny day, that roof is down and I'm proud to be seen.

As told to Jonica Bray



After
Karen's bust size went from a size 44J to a 36C

PHOTOS: JASON BOA • MAKEUP: MAURE HUSTON