

## Men in shapewear... oh dear



Photo courtesy of zippycart.com

A big deal was made when Sara Blakely, 41, the creator of Spanx, was named the youngest, female self-made billionaire ever on the [Forbes list](#). Blakely built her empire based on a pair of footless tights she perfected in her Decatur, Ga., apartment.

The company has grown through great word of mouth -- recent Oscar winner Octavia Spencer claimed to be wearing three pairs of the shapers at the Golden Globes ceremony this year.

But women have a long history of suffering for beauty - squeezing into girdles, push-up bras and high heels. We'll torture ourselves if we think it'll make a dress look better.

Men, however, are known for being proud of their beer bellies, for walking around without shirts, sometimes going "commando." Yet [Spanx](#) for Men debuted in February 2010, following a British line, Equmen, which introduced control undershirts in 2009. Inspired, coincidentally, by Blakely's creation. The line [claims](#) to do for men's chests what Spanx do for women's thighs.

According to a May 2010 New York Times [article](#), once control pieces were available for men, they flew off the shelves of stores like Nordstrom and Niemen Marcus.

Which is a nice idea, but who's buying them? Not the guys who buy their underwear at Kohl's or Sears - neither of which carry shape wear for men. Sales associates in the men's departments of said stores at the Rego Park said not only do their stores not carry men's shapers, men don't ask for them, either.

Do regular guys, who don't have \$58 to spend on an undershirt, or \$75 for a T-shirt, have any interest in shirts that will smooth out their waistlines? It doesn't seem likely. Of my more than 100 male friends on Facebook, only two responded when I asked if any wore shape wear, or if they knew anyone who did.

"Maybe if I gained another 50 pounds, but I don't see that happening any time soon," said Matthew Barone, of Lorain, Ohio.

The other friend, Chris Horan, of Fort Polk, La., was always a bit quirky, so I'm taking his statement "Yeah, why not, I should go full on anorexia" with a big grain of salt.

A waiter from Naples at La Figaro Cafe, on Bleeker Street, told a few friends and me stories about men he knew in Salt Lake City who wore shapers and thongs. But his accent was too thick, so we couldn't quite understand what he was saying. His hand gestures were hilarious, though.

I don't particularly know if I want men to wear shapers - I don't even know if women necessarily wear them all that well. If a man has a keg instead of a six-pack, then all that flab will have to go somewhere when he puts on the undershirt. Instead of having his stomach hang over his belt, he might have weird bulges on his back or near his arm pits. Or worse, maybe even cleavage! No man needs that.

There may be a market, men who have a ton of money and don't mind spending the money to look a little smoother under their suits. But if they were really a "thing," someone would have created a knock-off already. A mid-thigh shaper for women costs between \$40-\$60 on the Spanx website; at Wal-mart, you can get something similar for less than \$15.