

LOSE YOUR BELLY FAT

THE DIET, FITNESS & LIFESTYLE TWEAKS YOU NEED
TO LOSE YOUR BELLY



WELLNESS SERIES

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Introduction: Why We Accumulate Belly Fat

Why, oh why, does fat accumulate around our abdomens? It happens to both genders. Men call it the “beer belly,” and women call it the “muffin top.” Either way, that collection of fat cells around your midsection is unwanted and unhealthy.

Depending on your genetics and your lifestyle, fat accumulates in many different areas on your body. It can accumulate on your backside and your thighs, as well as your abdomen. That’s really just the way it is. But while you may be predisposed to put fat on your abdomen, you don’t have to continue storing fat there. In fact, you can begin to burn that fat and get the physique and health that you desire.

A Bit About Hormones and Fat Storage

When it comes down to fat storage there are a few hormones that play a critical role in not only storing fat, but also burning it. They include, but aren’t limited to, insulin and cortisol.

These two key players influence a good number of systems in your body. In fact, you might be surprised to learn that eating sugar causes you to store that sugar as fat, but when your body has blood sugar spikes and plummets (which are regulated by insulin), the low blood sugar causes an increase in cortisol and you end up in this cycle of hunger, stress, and fat storage.

You can break the cycle. You can teach your body how to burn fat by shifting your hormonal response. You can change how your body stores and burns fat. You can get rid of your belly fat and finally have the flat abs you want.

There are 7 steps to this process, so let’s get started.

Step #1 Cut the Carbs

You've undoubtedly heard about low carb diets. Now, low carb doesn't mean no carb. It means finding a good balance of healthy carbs so that you have balanced energy and hormone levels.

Why Cut Carbs?

Carbs, but not all carbs – we'll get to that in just a second – are stored as fat. They're quickly converted by your body into energy, and unless you're burning a lot of energy as you're taking in the carbs (like running a marathon), they're stored as fat for energy later.

The problem is that unless you've established a good fat burning exercise and diet routine, those carbs that turned into fat just aren't going to get burned. Instead, you're going to add more the next time you eat more starchy carbs.

When you cut carbs out of your diet, now your body has to find a different source of energy and guess what...? Fat is a fabulous source of energy. But your body won't turn to it, unless it has to.



What Type of “Carbs”

When we talk about carbs we’re talking about starchy carbs otherwise known as simple carbs.

These are things like:

- Flour from wheat or whole grains
- Rice, particularly white rice
- Sugary snacks and beverages

So, if you look at that list, it means things like bagels, bread, muffins, pasta, vanilla lattes, sodas and so on.

Now there are carbs that you CAN eat. Because guess what...? Veggies and fruits are carbs. And no one is going to tell you that you should eat fewer vegetables. You can also eat complex carbs like sweet potatoes, yams, and plantains.

How Many Carbs Can I Eat?

There are two groups of people; those who like structure in their diet and want numbers and data, and those who rebel against structure and data. So, when someone says, you should have less than 100 grams of carbohydrates a day you’re either going to think, “Okay, I’ll start tracking my carb intake, or you’re going to roll your eyes and think, “You’re not expecting me to count my carbs are you?”

A word on counting carbs...

Diabetics have found tremendous success in controlling, and often reversing, diabetes when they count carbs.

Counting doesn’t mean that for the rest of your life you have to put everything you eat into a measuring cup. In fact, you don’t have to put anything in a measuring cup if you don’t want to. You can learn to eyeball appropriate amounts.

Counting carbs, at least for a little while, gives you knowledge about what you eat, how much you eat, and how it impacts your body. It simply provides you with good information about your daily diet so that you have the power to make the right decisions for yourself.

Back to carb numbers:

More than 150 grams a day and you're gaining weight.

Between 50 and 100 grams a day, you're maintaining weight. (If you exercise a lot you'll be on the higher end of this, and if you don't exercise, you'll want to be on the lower end of this scale.)

Less than 50 grams of carbs a day and you'll lose weight and burn fat and ketones. Ketones are they byproducts of your body burning fat. They can also be burned as energy.

And before you think, OMG, I'll starve on 50 grams of carbs, know this...

There's

- 1 gram of carbs in a cup of spinach
- 11 grams in a cup of carrots
- 6 grams in a cup of broccoli
- 27 grams in a banana
- 12 grams in a cup of strawberries

You get the picture, right? You can eat tons of veggies and fruits to meet your daily carb requirements. So, let's look at that next.



Step #2 Eat More Veggies (and protein and healthy fat)

Myth – fat makes you fat.

There's a predominant and false belief that eating fat makes you fat. It's just not true. However, you do have to eat the right types of fat, because some fats cause damage to your cells and can influence your hormones and cause you to gain weight.

The right types of fats are:

- Avocado oil
- Coconut oil
- Olive oil
- Oil from fish, especially cold-water fish
- Grass-fed butter or ghee
- Animal fats like lard (yes, really)
- Nuts and seeds (But not oils from nuts and seeds because they're often damaged during processing and can cause damage to your cells. Example, canola oil, grapeseed oil, soybean oil)



Eat healthy fats to optimize your hormonal systems. In fact, you can enjoy fats on your veggies to help feel fuller. Fats have a high satiety factor, so you'll feel full and content. Try roasting veggies in avocado oil, it's delicious. Or make your own avocado oil salad dressing with tons of spices and enjoy.

Veggies are high in fiber, which improves digestion (good bye bloat), improves health, and makes you feel full. If you eat your veggies before you turn to the protein on your plate, you'll find that you may eat less protein. And that's probably okay. Most people get plenty of protein in their daily diet.

A Good Rule of Thumb

Okay, we've talked about protein, carbs, and fat, but how much should you eat of both, and how rigid should you be with your diet?

Unless you prefer to have structure and like to stick to specific numbers, there's room for you to vary your intake depending on your daily needs. You can use a "rule of thumb" to help you find balance. And lucky for you, there are a few ways you can approach it.



Rule of Thumb #1 By the Numbers

Less than 100 grams of carbs

0.7-1.0 grams of protein per pound of lean bodyweight. (Lean bodyweight is found by finding your bodyweight percentage and subtracting that amount from your actual bodyweight. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds and you have a fat percentage of 25% then that'd be 50 pounds of fat, so your lean bodyweight would be 150. Multiply that by your protein intake, 0.7, and you'll get your daily protein grams of 105)

Healthy fats – you don't really need to count your fat grams, just make sure they're healthy fats.

Rule of Thumb #2 Look at Your Plate

Look at your plate during mealtimes. Your protein should be the size of the palm of your hand, no bigger. Veggies should take up the rest of your plate. And you get fat from the salad dressings, dips, and fat on your meat. Add nuts, seeds, avocado and other healthy fats to your veggies to kick them up a notch and to improve your satiety.

It's that easy and it really does shift your metabolism so that you start burning fat all day long.

One of the things that gets in the way sometimes is the ability to consume veggies because really, those are the predominant carbs you're going to be eating. Sure, you'll eat a sweet potato or a yam once in a while, or maybe daily, but veggies play a critical role in your belly fat burning success. So, let's talk about how to add more veggies to your day.

Simple Ideas to Add More Veggies to Your Day.

1. Sautee them with your breakfast. Add a dollop of grass fed butter or bacon fat (yum!) to your pan and a cup or two of dark leafy greens. Cook them down until they're soft, take them out of the pan, add your eggs, cook and enjoy.
2. Add them to your eggs. You can also whip up a breakfast scramble packed with veggies.
3. Morning smoothie. If eggs aren't your jam, you can whip up a morning smoothie. There are tons of recipes online. Be sure to use whole fat yogurt or milk to get those healthy fats. Add greens, maybe some berries to sweeten it up, and you're ready to go.

4. Premade snacks. On the weekend, prep your veggies. Peel your carrots, chop your peppers, make veggies an easy snack to reach for when you want something to eat.
5. Dipper delight. You can dip your veggies in something or drizzle yumminess on them. Guacamole is an amazingly healthy and satisfying dip. You can also make delicious dips with avocado mayo and herbs and spices. Again, there are many healthy dips in the store and recipes online to choose from.
6. Giant salad. Salads can be fun, really. Every day, try a salad at lunch. Throw on it your favorites from the fridge. You might put some chopped up leftover chicken, some pecans, some dried cranberries, and a handful of those veggies you prepared on the weekend. Top it with a honey mustard dressing and enjoy. Or what about steak, hard-boiled eggs, cheddar cheese, and a ranch dressing made with avocado oil. Have fun with your salads. They can be delicious and not the least bit boring.



7. The focus of your meal. Try shifting your focus. Make the veggie side dishes the focus of your dinnertime meal instead of the meat. Meat can and should be secondary to the healthy fats and veggies that you're eating. Remember, you're probably getting plenty of protein in the day. So, find recipes that focus on veggies. For example, you might enjoy a delicious butternut squash soup as your entrée and maybe, if you want or need meat in your meal, a baked chicken thigh.

8. One pan meals are great. You might notice that sheet pan meals and instant pot/slow cooker meals are all the rage right now. Why? Because it's easier to prepare a healthy meal that way. You can roast chicken and veggies, and even some potatoes, on the same sheet pan and enjoy a versatile and delicious meal.
9. Eat by season. It's often difficult to know what is in season right now because we have access to food grown around the globe. For example, you can always find apples at the supermarket even though they're really only in season in the fall.

When you eat by season, chances are you'll spend less on your grocery bill. You'll also get the freshest produce, and you'll try new veggies and fruits. For example, squash is harvested in the fall, so you can try every type of squash your supermarket has to offer. You'll discover new flavors and try new recipes.

Okay, we've talked a lot about food and belly fat, but that's not the whole story. We also have to talk about hormones, and the most critical hormone to belly fat storage is the stress hormone cortisol.

Let's talk about that next.

Step #3 Reduce Stress

Cortisol is a necessary hormone. When your life is in danger, cortisol is released. It shifts your body into "fight or flight," which has an impact on a number of systems. You get a surge of adrenaline, you stop digesting so your body can focus energy on survival, and your breathing and heart rate increase. All of this is designed to help you get out of a life or death situation.

The problem is that modern life leads to what's called chronic stress, which results in cortisol being constantly added to your body. Your body doesn't know the difference between stress from commuter traffic and stress from being chased by a bear. It releases the same hormone.

Cortisol also inhibits insulin which, if you're eating a regular diet, means that you end up with low blood sugar levels. You eat because you feel starved and that results in a blood sugar spike and your intake is stored as fat. It alters hunger hormones. Additionally, cortisol causes systemic inflammation, which just makes you feel awful, low energy, brain fog and bloat. Bottom line, cortisol directly impacts abdominal fat storage.

So, what's a person to do? Well, if you're cutting back on simple carbs then you're taking huge steps to control your blood sugar levels. However, there's more that you can do. You can take steps in your day and in your life to reduce cortisol by reducing stress.



Yoga

Yoga is a nice way to get your body moving and to reduce stress. You don't have to commit to an hour-long session. You can actually perform a few movements at the beginning and the end of the day to create a focused start and end to your day. A few asanas or movements can help you target your needs. You can find a number of poses by benefit or by type online.

YogaJournal.com is a terrific result. Check out:

<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses>.

Meditation

Meditation is another practice that has been shown to reduce stress. In fact, it's been shown to lengthen your life as well. Both meditation and prayer have been connected to reduced cortisol levels and reduced fight or flight symptoms. That means it helps you reduce your belly fat and it's good for you.

So how do you add meditation to your day? There are a number of options.

Deep breathing – You can practice deep breathing. You might sit quietly for five minutes every morning, or any time of the day. Clear your mind and focus on your breath. Scan your body from head to toe, taking note of each area. As you begin to feel comfortable with five minutes, you can add time to your practice.

Walking meditation – Walking meditation is a bit like deep breathing, except that you're walking instead of sitting. Your thoughts are allowed to come and go gently, without you focusing on them. Instead, you focus on your breath as you walk. You can, and should, of course be aware of your surroundings, but only as much as you need to be safe.

Guided meditation – Another option is to try guided meditations. Online you can find hundreds of guided meditations, each focused on a different topic. They range from just a few minutes long to an hour. You can pick and choose depending on what you need at any given moment.

Quiet Time for Yourself Each Day

Finding, and embracing, quiet time for yourself each day is essential. It gives you the freedom to read, write, or pamper yourself. A busy parent with a house full of children can still find twenty minutes to take a relaxing bath and read a good book. You just have to make it, and yourself, a priority. Give yourself time to clear your head and relax. It's important.

Play

Play is another way to help your body combat cortisol and reduce stress. Remember, the goal here is to get rid of belly fat, but that doesn't mean that it can't be fun. Play. Learn a new sport, go for a hike in the woods, move your body and laugh.

At this point in your belly fat reduction plan:

- You've eliminated, or significantly reduced, your intake of simple carbs.
- You're eating more vegetables and more healthy fats.
- You're also eating a more balanced diet and taking time to fuel your body for fat burning.
- You have your energy systems streamlined so that you're burning fat for energy and no longer storing your food as fat.
- You've also taken steps to reduce your stress so that you don't have a constant drip of cortisol entering your system and wreaking havoc on your hormones and systems. That belly fat cortisol connection has been broken.

Now it's time to shift some of your daily habits like sleep and exercise. Let's look at sleep next.



Step #4 Improve Your Sleep

Did you know that a number of your hormones are reset during sleep? Additionally, damage to your body and your brain is cleared out while you sleep. If you struggle with sleep, then your hormones aren't able to reset, inflammation rages on, and you continue to store fat.

You're also less able to manage stress both physically and emotionally and, let's be honest, it's darn difficult to make healthy decisions when you're exhausted.

All you really want to do is feel better immediately, whether that's a sugary coffee drink from the coffee shop, or a cocktail and some French fries. And these do provide short-term pick me ups. You feel, temporarily like you have more energy and you may feel happier.

But the buzz goes away and your blood sugar plummets and then your right back where you started. You're in the fat storage circle that adds to belly fat (and fat everywhere else too). Your stress level is jacked up, you're always hungry, and you're always tired.

It's no way to live.

Up to now, you've learned some seriously effective and powerful ways to start burning fat and to stop your body from wanting to store it. And honestly, if that's all you do you'll see a significant difference in belly fat in a few short months. But if you want to continue your progress and speed up your results, then there are a few more steps you'll want to take.

The next step is to improve your quality of sleep.

Steps to Improve Sleep Starting Today

1. Strive to Follow the Natural Rhythm of the Day

That's a fancy way of saying, go to bed when the sun goes down and get up when it rises. Your body is designed to match the sleep cycle of the sun. Now, of course you probably can't do that because it would mean 12 hours of sleep during the winter and 7 to 8 during the summer. While it might be nice to occasionally sleep for 12 hours, it's not practical.

Instead, you might begin by getting up and going to sleep at the same time every day, even on the weekends. Sure, the occasional sleeping in is fine, but don't make a habit of it. Create a sleep routine and stick to it.

2. Set Aside Technology Before Bed

There are many studies showing that the light from technology, including your television, inhibits the release of sleep hormones in your body. Technology inhibits sleep. If you struggle to fall asleep, try shutting down all your "screens" an hour or two before bed.

3. Clear Your Thoughts

If stress and your never-ending task list keep you awake at night, or don't let you fall back to sleep, then try creating a different nighttime routine. Try scheduling your day the night before. Get everything organized so that you feel in control of tomorrow and can go to sleep with a bit more peace.

4. Don't Eat Before Bed

Try not to eat or drink before you go to bed. In fact, fasting between dinnertime and breakfast is another great way to burn more fat. If you're eating enough healthy fats, you shouldn't feel starving when you wake in the morning. Your dinnertime meal should last you through the nighttime.

5. Create a Sleep Routine

Creating a sleep routine means that you do the same thing every night before you go to bed. This trains your body that it's time to settle down and get ready for sleep.

By taking steps to reduce stress, you're already on the way to a good night's sleep. Adding these five tips into your routine will help you get the sleep that your body needs to stay healthy and to burn fat.

You'll be in a better position to get the necessary 7-9 hours and to wake feeling ready for the day and all of the decisions you have to make to live this wonderful life.

Next, we're going to talk about something that you've probably noticed has been missing until now. We're going to talk about exercise, but the approach to fat burning may surprise you.

Step #5 Sprint

Generally speaking, the type of exercise that most people do is not good for fat burning. In fact, chronic consistent exercise has been shown to increase hunger and increase fat storage. So, you're exercising and gaining weight. Not good!

We're talking about the commonly prescribed 20-30 minutes of aerobic exercise that most people are told to do every day. It doesn't work. If you've exercised like this, then you know it doesn't work.

What does work?

Well two things, actually. We're going to talk about them separately but the first one is to sprint.

Sprinting Defined

Here in this book sprinting means performing an all-out effort for 10-ish seconds. Rest as much as you need and then sprint again. Repeat this a handful of times and you're done.

So, you can sprint on your feet with running. That's probably the easiest.

You might sprint on your bike or in the pool or however you like to move your body.

The key here is to put forth 100% of your effort in being super-fast for about 10 seconds.



Sprinting (or high-intensity bursts of exercise for short periods of time) has been shown to shift fat burning. It's one of the best ways to burn fat and lose those last ten pounds. It just kicks that fat-burning energy system into high gear. Now, you don't want to do this every day.

Instead, you want to sprint maybe once a week. And it can, but it doesn't have to, be part of your other exercise program. For example, let's say that you're out for a relaxed jog; a really relaxed pace where your heartrate is low to moderate and you are able to carry on a conversation while you jog. You might take off and run as fast as you can for ten seconds. You'd then return to that moderate jog or walk until your heartrate returns to normal and you feel like you can sprint again.

You can also just decide that Wednesday is sprint day and run a few repeats on your neighborhood sidewalk or your treadmills.

Easy enough, right? You can find five to ten minutes a week to sprint. So, what do you do on the other days?

That's what we're talking about next.

Step #6 Move Your Body

Want to burn more fat? Move your body more than you do right now. Now we're not talking about running a marathon or starting a HIIT program. We're talking about moving your body.

You should be walking, at a minimum, 5 miles a day. That's 10,000 steps. You don't have to get your heart rate up to burn fat. You have to move.

Start taking stairs, parking far away from the store or your office, getting up out of your chair every 30 minutes. Your body was designed to move. Move it. Don't sit. Sitting slows your metabolism and promotes fat storage.

So how do you move your body more? In addition to the quick suggestions like taking the stairs and parking at the back of the lot try:

- Weekly hikes with friends and/or family.
- Walking to lunch.
- Walking to the store.
- Walking the dog.
- Walking meditation.
- Walking at lunch.
- Dancing.
- Joining a local sport club. Play baseball or frisbee golf. Heck, play golf – just walk from hole to hole instead of riding in the cart.
- Create a morning, or an evening, walking routine. You can talk on the phone and connect with friends and family as you walk. Just pay attention to where you're going so you're safe.
- Start a garden
- Paint a room, or three, in your home.
- Every hour or two, get up and go for a short ten-minute walk.
- Get a standing desk or a treadmill desk if you work from home, or if your office supports that.
- Get a job that requires you to move instead of sitting at a desk.
- Exercise every day, just make sure that you vary your workout and that you keep the intensity low to moderate. You don't have to set a PR (personal record) every time you go for a jog. Enjoy the process, keep your heart rate moderate, and burn fat.

The list could go on and on. Take a look at the opportunities you have in your day to move your body. Get a fitness tracking device if it helps. Exercising for 30 minutes a day isn't working. It makes you hungry and it promotes fat storage. Shift your focus on the occasional sprint and moving your body more.

If you want to add something to your day that feels more like "exercise" then start lifting weights once or twice a week. Lifting heavy things with full body functional movements also burns fat.

Step #7 Drink More Water

Finally, start drinking more water. Water is a terrific way to keep your body well hydrated and your systems functioning optimally, without taking in added sugar or calories. It keeps your digestive system humming along, which helps prevent bloating, constipation, and other discomforts that can make your belly look for feel larger than it is. The goal is to have flat abs and good health, right? You can't go wrong with water.

So how much should you drink?

It seems like this is often overthought and over-calculated. Drink before you get thirsty. Learn the signs of dehydration like insomnia, headache, low energy, and hunger, and drink before you begin to feel these signs.

If you need a quantifiable goal, drink the recommended 8 glasses of water a day and play around with this number. Try drinking 9 glasses and see if you feel better. Keep in mind that coffee and tea (unsweetened), are also fluids and can count towards your fluid intake for the day. But in the end, water is always better.



Tips for Drinking More Water Every Day

- Buy a water bottle that you love and keep it with you and filled.
- Drink a quarter of your bottle of water every 15-20 minutes.
- Drink a glass of water before each snack or meal.
- Drink a glass of water when you get up in the morning.
- Drink a glass of water before and after you exercise.
- Add flavor like citrus to your water to make it more palatable.

Okay, you now have 7 lifestyle steps to take to burn that belly fat once and for all. And if you maintain these seven steps, you won't put that weight back on again.

We'll wrap it up with some final tips to help you work your way through this seven-step belly fat burning process.

Creating Your Belly Fat Burning Regimen

Clean out your home. Get rid of all sugary snacks, simple carbs, and processed food. We're talking about the bagels, the white rice, the potato chips, the Lean Cuisine, and so on. No juice, no soda. No flavored coffee creams. Get rid of it all. When temptation is gone, it's much easier to make healthy choices.

Stock your home with healthy fats and snacks that you enjoy. Nuts like cashews are satisfying, delicious, and a good source of healthy fat. Prepped veggies, dips, and other snacks stocked in your home will help you make smart food decisions.

When you're feeling antsy or like you want to eat but you're not actually hungry, move your body.

Track your success. While you may not want to weigh yourself, or measure your abdomen every day, having a starting point and measuring your abdomen at the beginning of this process and then perhaps once a month thereafter will help you see that what you're doing really is working.

Be patient with yourself. You'll probably make mistakes. You may eat some French fries or indulge in a vanilla latte. The occasional (and it needs to be occasional) slip up is okay. It's not going to completely derail your efforts. In fact, occasionally slipping up helps you evaluate your progress. Because if you don't have sugar for a month and then you have a soda, that soda is going to taste weird. It may even taste bad. You'll see that your taste buds have changed, and you may notice that you feel terrible after drinking the soda. These slip ups can be good lessons.

Focus on what you're doing right. It's difficult to make a change. It takes time, patience, and determination. Don't let negative thoughts or emotions get in your way. Focus on what you're doing right, repeat what you're doing well and gradually improve your lifestyle. That belly fat didn't go onto your body in a month, or even six months, so please give your body time to get rid of it.

With the right steps, a bit of patience and persistence, and a good outlook you can and will integrate these seven steps into your life and say goodbye to belly fat!