

Know the Facts about Belly Fat!

Here's what you should know (and what you should do) about belly fat!

Did you know that belly fat is about more than the size of your waist? It's about your health, too. Take action now – get informed and get ahead of belly fat, no matter your size.

First thing's first: this article doesn't demonize fat. In fact, your body can't function without a certain percentage of fat. This article also doesn't judge: we're being open, realistic, and honest about belly fat and how to get rid of the fat you can see as well as the fat you can't.

Location is Everything

You heard me right! Your body has fat that you can't see – everyone has it.

Your body stores fat in the following two ways:

1. Subcutaneous fat (stored just under the skin) builds up in the thighs, hips, abdomen, etc. This is the fat you probably think of when you hear the word 'fat.'
2. Visceral fat (stored inside your body). This fat builds up around your vital organs (heart, liver, digestive tract, lungs, etc.) Nobody can see this fat; even very thin people often have it.

I'm willing to bet you're self-conscious about the fat you can see in the mirror. As a matter of fact, you should be more worried about the subcutaneous fat than you are about the visceral fat. Why? The visceral fat may be a bigger threat to your health than the subcutaneous fat is.

Fat is an Organ

Fat serves a purpose, and it plays physiological roles in your body. Visceral fat cushions your organs and protects them from potential harm. It also makes "lots of nasty substances," says Kristen Hairston, M.D., an assistant endocrinology and metabolism professor at Wake Forest School of Medicine.

Visceral fat becomes dangerous in certain quantities, where it has been linked by researchers to high blood pressure, heart disease type 2 diabetes, dementia and some cancers (among them, breast and colon cancer).

So, How'd it Get There?

After a point, bodies can reach obesity. That means they've run out of subcutaneous (under the skin) places to keep the fat, and they begin to store the fat in visceral layers around the organs.

Obesity puts you at an exponentially higher risk for visceral fat and related health complications. Consider the words of Carol Shively, PhD, professor of pathology-comparative medicine at Wake Forest School of Medicine:

“Fatty liver disease was, until recently, very rare in non-alcoholics. But with obesity increasing, you have people whose fat depots are so full that the fat is deposited into the organs. Now there is much interest in fat being deposited around the heart, as well.”

We all have fat – and most of us can take healthful, smart steps to minimize the risks. Take action now.



Too Much Fat?

If you want to know precisely where your body stores fat and how much you have, get a CT scan or an MRI, but there's a good rule of thumb that saves you the hassle.

Stand up and breathe normally. Use a measuring tape to measure around your waist, making sure the tape is level. Ideally, women should have a waist size of less than 35 inches; men should have a waist measurement of less than 40 inches. “Pear-shaped” women who have more fat in the hips and thighs are considered less at-risk than “apple-shaped” women with wider waistlines.

Dr. Hairston notes, “What we're really pointing to with the apple versus pear is that if you have more abdominal fat, it's probably an indicator that you have more visceral fat.”

Listen Up, Thin People!

Many thin people also have too much visceral fat, but they're even less concerned about it than larger people are because they can't tell when they look at themselves. Thin people with visceral fat often have a genetic predisposition towards fatty tissue in those areas. However, an inactive lifestyle can also encourage visceral fat. A study of British dieters showed that those who lost or maintained weight through diet exclusively had more visceral fat than those who exercised as well. No matter your size, stay active.

Myths about Belly Fat

There are probably more myths floating around about belly fat than any other health or fitness subject. Let's analyze the myths and facts about belly fat, how your body gets it, and how you can make it go away.

Myth #1

Working your abdominal muscles will get rid of belly fat.

People tend to think that exercising the muscles underneath the fat will get rid of the fat. People also think that doing leg presses all day will dissolve fat on their legs. These opinions make sense intuitively, but they're not true. In reality, your body puts on fat because of your genes. Long ago, your ancestors built up fat in a certain way, and your body still listens to those signals.



You store fat in your midsection because of basic biomechanics: it's the best place to keep energy because it's the easiest place to carry the fat around. Don't forget that your body stores fat as a survival tactic: your body works hard every day to create, store, and use body fat as efficiently as it can.

Along the same lines, if you stored fat in your fingers and toes, you'd waste a lot of energy swinging those heavy limbs around. Your body wants movable energy, so it prefers to store that energy on your belly and abdomen.

Fat also plays an anthropological role. Nature places fat in specific locations for specific reasons, especially in women. Fat stored in the breasts, buttocks and hips of women is designed to make the body more attractive to a potential partner. Your fat belongs on your body in certain places the way a peacock needs beautiful feathers: as a part of mother nature's mating mechanism. Often, mate attraction stems from exaggeration of physical traits. This pattern exists in primates and humans – body fat can actually enhance the mating experience. Of course, you don't do it consciously. You don't think about where you wear your body fat – it happens automatically.

Myth #2

After liposuction, I won't have any fat in unwanted locations.

Liposuction removes fat cells from specific areas. It's true that your body can no longer store fat in those areas where the cells have been removed, but some people who undergo liposuction find that the fat gets redistributed to the places where the fat cells were not removed.

A person with an unhealthy lifestyle who accumulates body fat and gets rid of it with liposuction might not be free forever. If he/she continues to follow that unhealthy lifestyle, the body will still create body fat. Because the fat cells in the abdomen are gone, the body will put the fat somewhere else – knees, under the arms, etc. Your body accommodates to the fat cells that you have, and if you remove some of them, your fat will be stored in different places. It won't just disappear altogether unless you change your lifestyle.

Unfortunately, some people do exactly this: they get liposuction, look great for a few weeks, and find themselves with body fat on their knees and elbows after a short time.

So, How Can I Really Lose Belly Fat?

There are a thousand and one books, products and pills that promise to reduce abdominal fat. They suggest that certain eating habits help you lose belly fat before other fat – but don't believe them. No food, drug, or schedule can make your body lose fat in one place when it's genetically wired to lose it in a different place.

To lose body fat, you must live on a calorie deficit. In other words, consume fewer calories than you use every day. When you 'spend' more calories than you eat, your body will take the hint. It will start to convert the fat you have into energy, and the fat all over your body will start to go away. It won't magically disappear from your belly all at once, but it will start to get used up from all your body's fat storage locations.

For men, abdominal fat usually goes last. Male bodies tend to lose fat from the face, arms, and legs first. Then they lose from the torso, chest, thighs and buttocks. Last, men's bodies burn the fat stored in the abdomen. As far as I know, there's no way to change this pattern – it's the body's efficient way to use energy. Some 'topical cutting gels' exist – they are toxic fat solvents that can change the pattern. But they're not worth the risk to your health; trust me.

If you genuinely want to lose body fat and care for your health, you have to lose fat from your whole body. Abdominal fat will go, but it will probably be the last fat you lose. Unfortunately, this is the truth, and although you might not want to hear it, there's no other way for you to make progress.

Women, unlike men, lose the fat on their hips and buttocks last. If you've ever tried to lose body fat and found 'stubborn' fat around your hips and thighs, you know about this phenomenon. In the same way that men must be patient to lose abdominal fat, women must be patient to lose hip and buttock fat.



Of course, we all know those last 10 pounds can be hard to ditch. It's even harder if you're a fan of popular American processed foods and sodas – as the Grocery Warning book explains, these products promote obesity and make your body store fat more than it ordinarily would.

The good news is that you can and should take full control over your body. Physical exercise will help; if it hasn't helped you, you simply haven't been doing the right exercise. You should do strength training, not just cardio – build your muscles and core

strength, and your body will burn fat for hours (or even days) after you work out. Muscles take energy to maintain, and your body burns fat to get that energy.

You can also find lots of helpful tips to control your carbohydrate consumption and alter natural hormone levels in your body to reduce body fat. But nothing is a miracle – everything takes some work, commitment, and strength of character. But nothing is impossible, either. Losing those last 10 pounds might feel monumental, but when you take it one day at a time, you can do it.

Remember: abdominal fat doesn't exist in a vacuum. You must take a whole-body approach to cut belly fat and keep it off. There is no shortcut – even liposuction, as we've discussed, doesn't solve the problem. It just redistributes fat into places that might look even worse than before.

Take Action Now!

If you're serious about safely melting the pounds away without starvation diets, gimmicks, or yo-yo routines, contact me, Dr. Shirine Hegazi, today. Call 703-573-5500 or email us at vemmabrand@gmail.com to schedule an appointment. Imagine how you'll feel when the healthier version of you is here to stay!