

10 FOODS TO AVOID IF YOU WANT A FLAT BELLY



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10 Foods to Avoid If You Want a Flat Belly

by

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Introduction

If your ultimate goal is a flat belly, you may be looking for advice on which foods to eat and which ones to avoid. Unfortunately, depending on who you listen to, the list of foods to avoid can vary. Some experts say there is no definitive list of foods to avoid in order to obtain or maintain a flat stomach. However, there are groups of foods and foods within those groups that should be avoided for optimal health.

The list of foods to avoid likely won't hold any surprises for you either. It includes things that are mostly sugar-filled or contain refined carbohydrates. Eating too many sugar- and carbohydrate-filled foods affects how your body processes glucose and uses insulin.¹ A change in the insulin process can also disrupt other hormones, which can lead to belly gaining weight.

We'll begin by discussing foods to avoid if you want a flat belly. We'll focus mainly on groups of foods and add some examples. From there, we'll move to "belly fat traps" that you likely already have in your kitchen. Then, we'll talk about five foods to avoid at all costs if you want your waistline to shrink, and we'll even talk about some simple swaps you can make to satisfy your cravings without adding extra weight.

Chapter 1

10 Foods to Avoid If You Want a Flat Belly

Many people think that belly fat is simply a problem with appearance. The truth is that holding fat in your belly can cause health issues. Where you hold your weight is partially determined by genetics, but your hormones and diet also play a part.

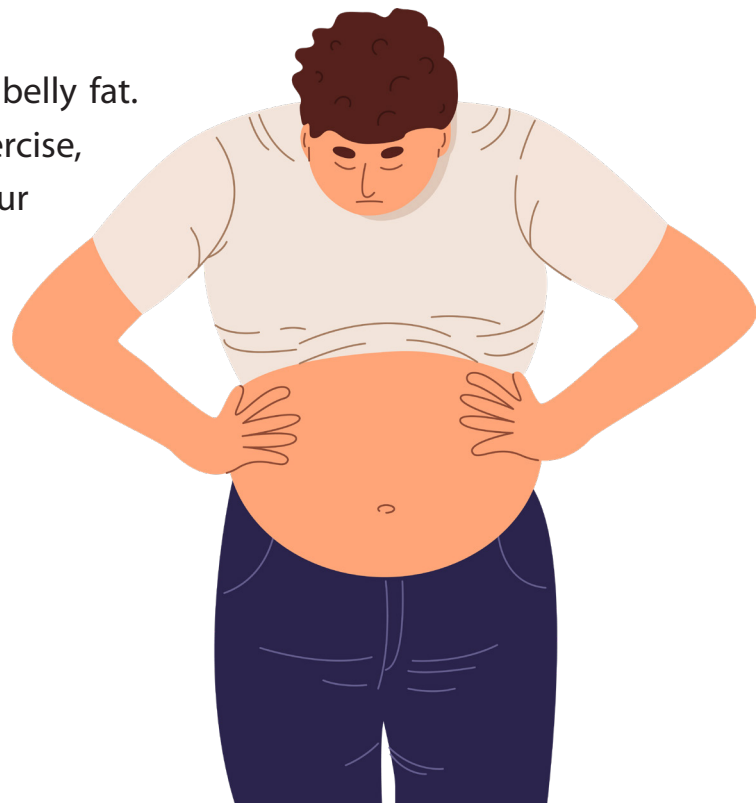
Rather than simply give you ten foods to avoid, we will give you foods in three categories to avoid—ten foods in each of these categories.

Why You Should Be Concerned About Belly Fat

There are two main body types: pear and apple. Pear-shaped people typically gain weight in the lower body—in the thighs and hips. Apple-shaped people tend to have weight settle in their stomachs.

If you carry excess weight in your belly, you should consider finding ways to trim the fat. People who carry weight in their bellies have an increased risk of health problems. Those problems include diabetes, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, and high cholesterol levels. Belly fat sends signals to your body to create cytokines that encourage systemic, chronic inflammation.

All is not lost. You aren't powerless against belly fat. One thing that helps is getting regular exercise, but in addition to that, you can change your diet. If you want to trim the fat in your belly, you should avoid foods that are high in refined carbohydrates, certain sugars, and trans fats.



Fructose

Fructose is not technically a food on its own. However, it is at the top of the list of foods you must avoid to lose belly fat. An occasional piece of fruit that contains fructose isn't a big problem. But, if you eat fructose in large quantities or as the highly processed high-fructose corn syrup, it can lead to excess belly fat. Fructose triggers hormones and proteins in the body differently than sucrose or glucose do.

Fructose doesn't enter your bloodstream and trigger the insulin-releasing cells in your pancreas. Instead, it goes straight to your liver, where it triggers the release of cortisol. Cortisol increases the potential that fat will be stored in the belly.

Fructose also doesn't increase leptin production or decrease ghrelin production. Those two hormones help to balance the hunger you feel, so you eat when you're hungry and stop when you feel full. All of these factors combine to increase weight gain in your belly.

A *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* study published in October 2015 studied how fructose-sweetened drinks affected belly fat. The study determined that consuming these beverages led to obesity and specifically increased the risk of developing belly fat. Limiting fructose, particularly high-fructose corn syrup, can help you lose weight.

Foods that are full of fructose and that should be avoided include:

- ✗ Soda
- ✗ Candy
- ✗ Juice
- ✗ Canned fruit
- ✗ Frozen foods
- ✗ Breakfast cereals
- ✗ Coffee creamer
- ✗ Condiments and dressings
- ✗ Ice cream
- ✗ Sports drinks



Refined Carbohydrates

While fructose is a carbohydrate, it isn't the only one you should watch for. Refined carbohydrates have been highly processed, which removes fiber and beneficial nutrients. These refined carbohydrates move swiftly through the digestive system, which triggers a significant, rapid increase in glucose and insulin. Following the rise of glucose and insulin, they will crash, which will leave you tired, hungry, and irritable.

According to a study published in 2016 in Missouri Medicine, eating a diet that's high in refined carbohydrates increases the risk of developing metabolic syndrome. One of the characteristics of the syndrome is extra belly fat. If you replace refined carbohydrates with complex carbohydrates and good, high-quality protein, you can reduce belly fat and achieve a slimmer waist.



Carbohydrate-rich foods that you should avoid include:

- ✗ White bread
- ✗ White pasta
- ✗ White rice
- ✗ Potato chips
- ✗ French fries
- ✗ Pizza
- ✗ Instant oatmeal
- ✗ Candy and chocolate
- ✗ Ice cream
- ✗ Cakes, cookies, and other desserts

Trans Fats

Trans fats are another contributor to belly fat. When the US FDA learned how dangerous trans fats could be, the organization began eliminating all partially hydrogenated oils from manufactured and processed foods.

Consuming trans fats can increase belly fat, promote chronic inflammation, and increase the possibility of developing insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome. A study published in *Obesity* in 2012 reported that trans fats increase visceral fat (dangerous belly fat) more significantly than saturated fats.

To easily avoid trans fats, don't eat foods that contain partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. Those foods include:

- ✗ Margarine
- ✗ Microwave popcorn
- ✗ Frozen breakfast sandwiches
- ✗ Crackers
- ✗ Doughnuts
- ✗ Fried foods
- ✗ Frozen pizza
- ✗ Processed crackers
- ✗ Biscuits
- ✗ Commercially prepared cookies, cakes, and pies

As you can see, there is some crossover between the lists of foods to avoid from each group. If you discover a food in all three groups, it's especially important to avoid it.

Chapter 2

“Belly Fat Traps” in Your Kitchen

If you’ve decided you want to lose weight, you may think you are on the right track to getting rid of that pesky belly fat. Concentrating on how you look or how skinny you become is the wrong focus for your weight loss journey. Instead, you should focus on your health. If you focus on health and choosing the right foods and activities, the way you look will be a bonus along the journey.

Here are some of the weight loss traps you may face in your own home. You may face information overload, so it’s essential to create a plan and stay with it. Otherwise, you’ll get trapped in a cycle of misinformation and find yourself struggling to escape. Here are common weight loss traps² to avoid when you are trying to eat better, lose weight, and become healthy.

Diet soft drinks: Sodas are typically made with high fructose corn syrup now rather than real sugar. So, many people who are trying to lose weight begin to drink diet sodas thinking they are a better choice. However, artificial sweeteners can be worse for you than high amounts of sugar. The best option is not to drink soda at all, but if you do need or want a soda occasionally, only consume them in moderation and choose water more often than anything else to drink.



Stepping on the scale: Checking your weight once in a while is fine, but be careful not to become obsessive about the number on the scale. This trap can have you thinking you aren't progressing because the number on the scale isn't where you want it to be. If the numbers on the scale aren't moving the way you want, you can become frustrated and abandon your plan. Instead of the number on the scale, it's a better plan to focus on the way your clothes fit and the measurement around your waist. Muscle weighs more than fat because of the density of the two elements.

Misinformation about calories: Calories equate to energy, so not all calories are bad. Fruit, for example, has a relatively high calorie content because it has a relatively high sugar content, but fruit is considered part of a healthy diet. If you want to lose weight, you need to take in fewer calories than you expend. Too many calories and a sedentary lifestyle are the real issues rather than the calories themselves.

You don't need to starve yourself: The starvation trap can be quite detrimental to your health. If you don't eat, your metabolism will slow down because your body isn't working continuously to burn calories.

Eating a lot is manly: Peer pressure often has men thinking they should stuff their faces, but this can keep guys overweight. Fight the peer pressure and eat normal portions when with your friends.

Everyone has 100 pounds to lose: Perhaps you really do have 100 pounds to lose, but you can't expect to lose it all at once. If you have unrealistic goals and expectations, you are more likely to fail. Instead, it's better to set small, manageable, realistic goals. You can set a significant goal, but take small steps to reach it.



Chapter 3

5 Foods to Avoid at All Costs to Shrink Waistlines

If you want to understand how certain foods cause belly fat, you must understand the roles of insulin and cortisol in your body. Counting calories alone won't help you to lose weight. Instead, you should understand how the foods you're eating affect the hormones of cortisol and insulin to increase fat stores in the belly.



Insulin

Insulin is the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels. It also causes the body to store fat. If the food you eat spikes your blood sugar levels, insulin starts working. When insulin starts working to correct out-of-control blood sugar levels, it causes storage of belly fat.

Cortisol

Cortisol is at its highest levels when you wake up in the morning. Stress, caffeine, and lack of sleep can cause cortisol levels to be out of whack. If you cause your cortisol levels to rise too high, you cause your body to be stressed, and insulin begins working, causing body fat storage.

Here are the five foods that you should avoid if you have large stores of belly fat.

Caffeine

Caffeine is technically not a food, but more people consume this stimulant than any other in the world.³ Many times, caffeine is responsible for increasing belly fat. Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than others. Some people don't want to give up caffeine, and some just have a hard time doing it. The suggestion is to give up caffeine for two weeks and see how you feel.

Caffeine is linked to increased cortisol and insulin resistance. Both cortisol and insulin resistance are linked to increased belly fat.

Refined Carbohydrates

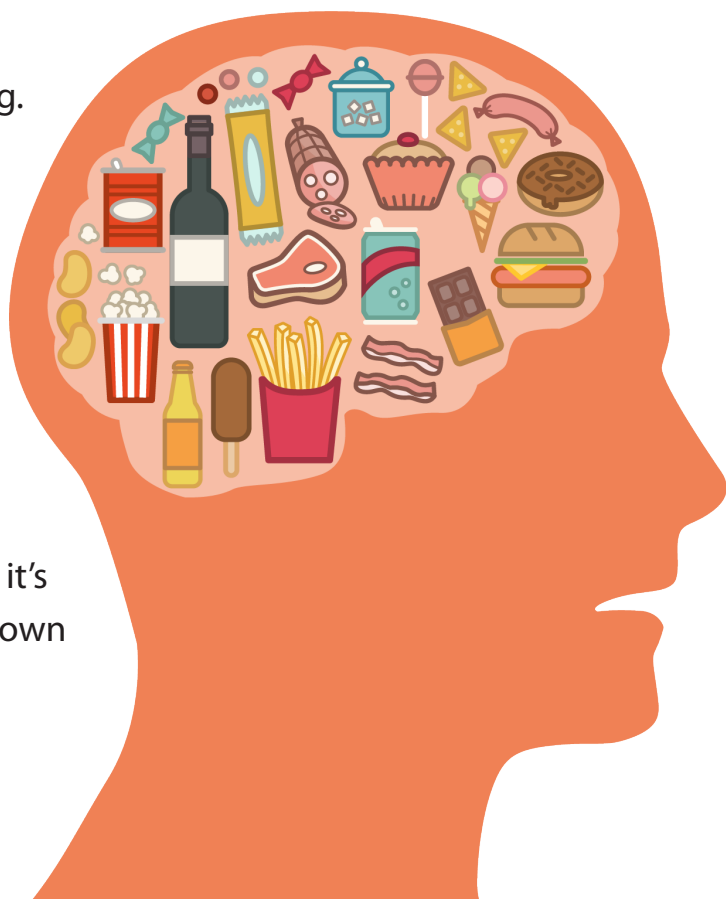
We mentioned these earlier. Refined carbs increase insulin resistance, and they tend to be lacking in key nutrients because they have been stripped of them. Refined carbohydrates are linked to blood sugar spikes, which in turn spike insulin production and cause fat storage in the belly.

Examples of refined carbs are chips, white bread, white pasta, pastries, pizza, and store-bought desserts.

Alcohol

An occasional drink isn't necessarily a bad thing. Some would say a drink now and then might be helpful. However, the body must break down alcohol before it attacks anything else. Because the body must break down alcohol first, anything you eat sits in your gut until your body breaks down every bit of alcohol.

If you are drinking and eating late at night, it's unlikely your body will break everything down before you go to bed.



Artificial Sweeteners (Non-nutritive Sweeteners)

It seems like a good idea to have a sweet treat without all the calories in sugar. However, eating or drinking something with no sugar doesn't work the way you would think. There has been a proven connection between artificial sweeteners and weight gain. Research indicates that non-nutritive sweeteners block an enzyme that boosts insulin sensitivity which means fat will be stored in the belly.

Foods that commonly contain non-nutritive sweeteners are diet sodas, pudding, candy, sugar-free yogurt, and canned fruits.



Corn, Canola, and Soybean Oils

Refined vegetable oils are in most processed foods. The word “vegetable” in the oil can cause people to think it's good for you. However, the opposite is true. Consuming too much processed oil also increases the amount of omega-6 fatty acids, which can lead to inflammation.

Inflammation can make it nearly impossible to lose weight. These oils are hidden in a variety of foods, so make sure you read the label. Healthy alternatives to vegetable oils are olive oil, eggs, avocado and avocado oil, coconut oil, nuts and seeds, grass-fed butter, and some nut butters.

Chapter 4

Simple Swaps to Satisfy Cravings Without Packing on Pounds

If you are someone who likes to snack or who has multiple cravings, you may wonder how to curb your cravings without adding extra pounds. Making a few simple swaps⁴ can save you tons of calories and satisfy your cravings.

1. Use mustard instead of mayo. There are virtually no calories in mustard, while mayo has at least 90 calories for one tablespoon.
2. Chives instead of cheese in your scrambled eggs. This swap can save you about 100 calories.
3. Try seltzer instead of soda. There are numerous ways to flavor seltzer, and it will save you 100 calories if you opt for seltzer instead of soda.
4. Not every nut is created equal. Nuts keep hunger at bay, but you want to take care not to eat too many. If you choose pistachios instead of walnuts, you will save about 30 calories.
5. Choose fresh fruit over dried fruit. Fresh fruits have fewer calories than dried fruit because dried fruit is filled with sugar



These are only five of the many swaps you can make to save calories and curb cravings.



Conclusion

When you are trying to lose weight, it's essential to pay attention to your belly fat. If you have excessive belly fat, it can be a sign that your insulin production is off or your cortisol production is excessive.

To shrink belly fat, there are groups of food to avoid. Within each group of food, there are individual foods you should also avoid. Caffeine, non-nutritive sweeteners, and refined carbohydrates are three that should be avoided.



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