

BEST & WORST FOODS FOR BELLY FAT



Belly fat is worse for you than fat elsewhere on your body.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True

Excess accumulation of belly fat is more dangerous than excess fat around your hips and thighs. Belly fat is associated with serious health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Your genes can contribute to your being overweight and help determine where you carry this extra fat, but poor lifestyle choices are likely to worsen the issue.



Fatty foods, such as butter, cheese, and fatty meats, are the biggest cause of belly fat.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True
- **CORRECT ANSWER:** False

Eating high-fat foods is not helpful, but excess calories of any kind can increase your waistline and contribute to belly fat. Still, there is no single cause of belly fat. Genetics, diet, age, and lifestyle can all play a role. Changing dietary habits can help you fight the battle of the bulge and fight belly fat: Read labels, reduce saturated fats, increase the amount of fruits and veggies you eat, and control and reduce your portions.

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Calories from alcohol are worse for belly fat than other calories.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True

Excess calories -- whether from alcohol, sweetened beverages, or oversized portions of food -- can increase belly fat. Our bodies need calories, yet gram for gram, alcohol has almost as many calories as fat.

Alcohol does seem to have a particular association with an increased waistline, though. In general, that's because when you drink alcohol, your liver is too busy burning off alcohol to burn off fat, leaving you with a beer belly. Studies show that alcohol can cause you to feel hungry by affecting hormones that regulate a sense of satiety.



Which of the following fats not only can make you gain weight, but also can move fat from other parts of your body to your belly?

- **YOUR ANSWER:** Trans fats

Researchers at Wake Forest University found that trans fats, which are created by partially hydrogenated oil, increase the amount of fat around the belly and redistribute fat tissue to the abdomen from other parts of the body. Trans fats may be found in such foods as margarine, pastries, cookies and crackers, and fried and convenience foods.

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Which of the following shows promise for fighting belly fat?

- **YOUR ANSWER:** All of the above

Green tea, in combination with exercise, could help you lose weight, according to the Journal of Nutrition. Researchers think substances in green tea known as catechins stimulate the body to burn calories and enhance loss of belly fat. Blueberries also show promise, albeit in rodents. In one study, rats bred to become obese were fed either a high-fat diet or a low-fat diet rich in blueberries. Rats fed a blueberry-rich diet had less abdominal fat.



Fast food can contribute to belly fat because the items are often:

- **YOUR ANSWER:** All of the above

Many fast food options are typically high-fat, calorie-dense foods that are eaten in large portions -- all of which contribute to over-consumption of calories, weight gain, and an increase in belly fat when eaten frequently. Many fast food restaurants don't provide nutritional information, but studies have shown that when this is available, people tend to pick lower-calorie meals.

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Substituting diet soft drinks for regular soft drinks is a good way to trim belly fat.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True
- **CORRECT ANSWER:** False

According to the American Heart Association, “soft drinks and other sugar-sweetened beverages are the No. 1 source of added sugars in the American diet.” Added sugars mean added calories – something you want to avoid to help with weight loss and cut down on belly fat. Yet, high-fructose corn syrup has gradually replaced refined sugar as the main sweetener in soft drinks and has been blamed as a potential contributor to the obesity epidemic.

Does switching to diet sodas help? Although some research has suggested that people who drink artificially sweetened sodas as part of a calorie-restricted diet do lose weight, other studies have suggested that diet soft drinks could even lead to weight gain. For now, there’s no conclusive evidence either way.



To help trim your waistline, you should eat a diet high in fiber.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True

To trim your waistline, add whole grains to your diet. For example, choose brown or wild rice instead of white rice. Refined and other highly processed foods can contribute to weight gain and interfere with weight loss. A study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed that a calorie-controlled diet rich in whole grains can trim extra fat from the waistline of obese subjects.

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Studies suggest you can trim your waistline by replacing refined grains with whole grains. Which of the following is a whole grain food?

- **YOUR ANSWER:** Couscous
- **CORRECT ANSWER:** Popcorn

Couscous, spaghetti, and corn flakes are made from refined grains (though whole grain options may be available). But popcorn is a whole grain food that can boost fiber. The best way to prepare popcorn is with an air-popper, which requires no oil for cooking. Read labels to see what oils have been added to microwave popcorn.

All else being equal, though, whole grains are better than refined grains because they tend to be high in fiber and take longer to digest. This satisfies your hunger better and helps lower blood glucose levels and reduce fat.



Men tend to collect more belly fat than women.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True

Overall, men tend to store fat in the abdominal area more than women do, thanks to sex hormone differences. Before age 40, women tend to store most of their fat in the hips, thighs, and buttocks. After 40, as estrogen levels drop, body fat is redistributed to the abdomen.

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Belly fat is harder to lose than fat elsewhere on your body.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** True
- **CORRECT ANSWER:** False

When you lose weight, you're much more likely to lose it in your midsection. Losing weight on a well-balanced plan will melt body fat, including belly fat. The best way to decrease your waist size is through healthy eating and regular exercise.



Spot exercise, such as sit-ups or crunches, target belly fat.

- **YOUR ANSWER:** False

Doing sit-ups, crunches, or other abdominal exercises will strengthen your core muscles and help you lose fat, but they don't specifically work on belly fat. In other words, spot exercise won't decrease belly fat. The only way to lose belly fat (or any kind of fat) is through dieting and exercise. Aerobic exercises, such as running, swimming, cycling, and tennis, are some of the best to help reduce body fat.

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Belly fat has been linked to which of the following health problems:

- **YOUR ANSWER:** Osteoporosis
- **CORRECT ANSWER:** All of the above

Belly fat appears to be especially bad for the heart. Studies have linked belly fat to heart failure, atherosclerosis, and other cardiovascular problems. It also has been associated with osteoporosis, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, colorectal cancer, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure, and other health problems.



Which of the following is the best plan for reducing belly fat?

- **YOUR ANSWER:** Cutting calories and getting more physical activity

Most scientific evidence suggests that a calorie-controlled diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, beans, nuts, seeds, lean meat, fish, eggs, and poultry is the foundation for a diet that provides all the nutrients you need while helping to whittle your waistline. Weight loss experts recommend combining this diet with 30 to 60 minutes of exercise most days of the week.

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