

How to get a flat stomach - fast

The stomach is one of the problem places on your body where weight gain tends to end up and once the fat settles there it can seem nearly impossible to remove; however hard you exercise or try to eat healthily.

Not only is stomach fat unsightly it also increases your risk of poor health. This is because fatty tissue that is stored around the stomach and abdomen (sometimes called intra-abdominal, or visceral fat) carries a greater health risk than fat located in the lower body around the bottom and thighs. Some health studies show that abdominal fat leads to raised blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, high blood sugar, insulin resistance syndrome (metabolic syndrome X) and heart disease. Because of this, some experts believe that the ratio of your waist to hip is more important than your actual weight in predicting future health risks.

Fortunately, stomach fat isn't as impossible to shift as you may think it is. You just need to know how. Follow these fifteen steps and you will see major improvements not just in your waistline but also in your health and wellbeing.

- 1) **Get walking:** You know walking is great for your heart, legs, bottom and energy level but here's a little-known fact: It's also a great way to flatten your belly. Women who walked briskly for 30 minutes to an hour a day for 14 weeks shrunk their belly fat by 20% - without changing their eating habits, reports a Canadian study.
- 2) **Eat more often:** Here's another little known fact: eating more often than usual can help give you a flatter stomach. By eating little and often - and keeping your digestion and blood sugar levels steady - your body only takes in what it can process and little is stored as fat, so the risk of stomach bulge or bloating is minimised. So make sure you don't leave more than three hours between meals and snacks.
- 3) **Watch your posture:** Poor posture and slumping as you walk can make even a flat stomach look saggy because when your body is aligned correctly, core muscles will work harder leading to a firmer stomach. Good posture has nothing to do with the old school rigidity of pulling in your stomach and puffing your chest out. Good posture is about keeping your body upright and stomach firm by using the muscles that run along your back and spine and legs to lift you up.
- 4) **B vitamins:** Make sure you get sufficient B vitamins, especially vitamin B6 - found in banana, fish, nuts, seed and whole grains - which is a good remedy for bloating. Other foods that can naturally decrease bloating include potassium rich foods such as bananas and green leafy vegetables.
- 5) **Do your sit ups correctly:** Sit ups performed correctly can help you give you a firm stomach and stronger back and if you perform them correctly you don't have to do hundreds a day. To do a sit up correctly make sure you do it slowly and carefully. Lie down on the floor and bend your knees at a 45

degree angle. Tilt the pelvis up and release so your spine is in contact with the floor except at your lower back, where it will naturally come off the floor. Curl your chin towards your chest, leaving an apple-sized gap between your neck and chest. Keeping your hands on the floor, gently and smoothly lift your shoulders off the floor. You should take around two seconds to come up on an out breath and then breathe in as you release. Aim to do 15 reps, and build up to two to three sets at a time. Try to make this part of your daily getting up routine.

6) Ditch the gum: Chewing gum can cause bloating because your stomach starts producing digestive juices for food that doesn't arrive and because when you chew gum you tend to swallow more air so best to avoid. If you want to freshen your mouth after a meal, brush your teeth or drink a cup of peppermint tea instead. Peppermint tea is known to help reduce bloating.

7) Cut out salt, sugar, junk food, and refined and processed foods: These can all lead to bloating, weight gain and digestive problems. Cut out caffeine too. Caffeine is a diuretic but it won't cut out bloating because it hinders the secretion of excess salt and toxins from the body.

8) Increase your fluid intake: You need to drink more not less if you have water retention and bloating, to help your body dilute the salt in your tissues and allow you to excrete more salt and fluid. Aim for 6 to 8 glasses of filtered water a day.

9) Avoid alcohol: Any alcoholic drink can add to the size of your stomach because it causes bloating and is dense in calories. Every gram of alcohol contains the same amount of calories as a gram of butter. Like other calorie-packed foods it promotes weight gain. If you can't give it up completely bear in mind that beer drinkers tend to have the highest waist-to-hip-ratios.

10) Eat slowly: If you eat too quickly this can overload your stomach, which can cause gas and bloating. Also you tend to gulp more air when you eat quickly so remember to eat slowly and really chew your food.

11) Work out your core muscles: Your core muscles lie behind your abdominals and keep your spine upright and control your balance and posture. A firmer core means a stronger back and a flatter stomach. To strengthen your core muscles, sit back in a chair with your head up, knees bent and feet on the floor. Rotate your shoulders up and back, and rest your arms by your sides. Pull your stomach in and breathe; imagine you are doing up an imaginary zip on the front your trousers. Keeping your stomach in raise and lower one leg at a time 10 times.

12) No starchy carbohydrates after 7 pm: Make sure you eat breakfast, then have a mid morning snack followed by a healthy lunch, a mid afternoon snack and a light supper. Try to eat most of your starchy carbohydrates before 7 pm. This is because carbohydrates are your energy boosters and you need to eat them during the day when you have an opportunity to burn off calories as

energy not at nighttime when you need to be resting. If you do this you'll notice a difference immediately the next morning when you wake up.

13) Massage your abdomen: If you suffer from bloating or digestive upsets abdominal massage can help ease symptoms. Use the flat of your hand to apply light pressure in anti-clockwise circular movements because this can help blood flow, relax muscles and encourage digestion.

14) Stress and stomach fat: Some health studies show that abdominal fat can develop as a result of stress. This is because the hormone cortisol is released during stress, and a high level of cortisol in the body appears to stimulate the storage of fat around the belly and abdomen. Researchers at Yale University studied 60 women and found that the more stress they were under, the more fat they stored around their stomachs. So if your life is constantly stressful make stress management a priority. An aromatherapy bath is a great way to unwind at the end of a busy day and can also be helpful for bloating. Add fennel or chamomile to a warm bath and soak for 20 minutes.

15) Whatever you do, don't go on a diet: Irregular eating habits can increase bloating. If you leave your stomach empty for long periods of time the secretion of digestive enzymes slows down. If you've got weight to lose, avoid fad diets and bouts of starvation, deprivation and desperation and eat a fresh, healthy diet rich in organic whole grains, fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds and oily fish. This will keep your metabolism (fat burning) up and your digestion steady and leave you with a smaller stomach.

(For more detailed information on getting rid of that fat around the middle see my book 'Fat around the Middle' and if you think stress could be causing the problem it is possible to test for this by doing an Adrenal Stress Test using saliva to measure levels of cortisol and this can be organised by post, phone 01892 507598 or go to www.naturalhealthpractice.com)

Next Steps to a healthier lifestyle:

I hope you found this article both interesting and informative. Now that you have taken the first step in finding out ways to help your health it is crucial that you keep this momentum to transform your lifestyle into a healthy one. Don't put things off for later (this seldom ever works), take action now by choosing one or all of the below next steps and secure your health for the future.

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