

*Making Everything Easier!™*

# Belly Fat Diet

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

## **Learn to:**

- Shed unwanted belly fat
- Discover the foods and exercises that keep your midsection healthy
- See results within days

**Erin Palinski**



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Visit [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/bellyfatdiet](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/bellyfatdiet) to view this book's cheat sheet.

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# ***Belly Fat Diet For Dummies®***

## **by Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, CDE**



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### **Belly Fat Diet For Dummies®**

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## About the Author

**Erin Palinski-Wade**, RD, CDE, and “America’s Belly Fat Fighter!” is a nationally recognized nutrition and fitness expert who has contributed her expertise to media outlets such as the *CBS Early Show*, *The Doctors*, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *News 12*, *Fox News*, *Fitness Magazine*, *Consumer Reports*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Prevention Magazine*. She is the author of two weight loss curriculums for health professionals including the “[Healthy 'n' Fit Pediatric Weight Management Program](#)” and the “[Healthy Resolutions Weight Management Program](#).”

Erin runs a private practice in New Jersey, the Vernon Nutrition Center, where she provides in-office as well as telephone and Internet-based nutrition counseling and coaching. She also frequently serves as a media spokesperson and motivational and keynote speaker, and often partners with food companies and corporations as a nutrition consultant.

Erin is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Personal Trainer, and Certified Diabetes Educator. She currently serves on the Dietetic Internship Advisory Board for the [College of Saint Elizabeth](#) and has been appointed to the [ZiggityZoom.com](#) advisory board as the nutrition and obesity expert. Erin focuses on providing practical, realistic advice that allows you to not only start seeing results instantly but more importantly, maintain results permanently!

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those individuals who have ever struggled with their weight and have shown through hard work, dedication, and perseverance that you can achieve your goals.

This book is also dedicated to my incredibly loving and supportive family — without your constant support and belief in me, this book would not have been possible.

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# Introduction

How many people do you know who are 100 percent satisfied with how their stomach looks? Not many, right? Who wouldn't want a flatter stomach, defined abs, and a slim, toned appearance? In today's society, waistlines are expanding at epidemic proportions. And although folks give belly fat cutesy names like "muffin-top" or "beer-belly" or "love handles," there's nothing cute about it!

Belly fat not only looks less than desirable, but it also can have very real and very dangerous health implications. The latest research links belly fat to everything from heart disease and type 2 diabetes to certain cancers and even an increased risk of dementia. And, sadly, more individuals today are overweight than not, so something needs to change.

What if you could quickly and effectively shed this excess belly fat and keep it off for good? And what if you were able to eat delicious food while doing it? Sound too good to be true? Well, it isn't!

Throughout *Belly Fat Diet For Dummies*, I show you simple, yet incredibly effective, strategies to shrink belly fat, improve your health and dietary habits, increase your physical activity, and have you looking and feeling great in no time. I help you break through common misconceptions and myths and show you what really works in the fight against belly fat. Whether you have more than 100 pounds to lose or just need to shed that last 5 pounds, I show you what works best for you so you can be successful for life. Get ready to say bye-bye to belly fat forever!

## About This Book

Just as no two individuals are exactly alike, no two individuals lose weight in the exact same way either. So fad diets and cookie-cutter weight loss plans usually don't work for most people. But *Belly Fat*

*Diet For Dummies* solves this problem! Throughout this book, I help you discover exactly what caused you to gain your belly fat and what customized plan is best for you to lose your belly fat, achieve your ideal body weight, and keep the weight off permanently! I don't include any one-size-fits-all plans here. Instead, I offer realistic, practical, and individualized advice that can have you achieving your goals in no time.

What also sets this book apart from other weight loss plans is the attention given to weight maintenance. Have you lost weight before only to regain it? You're not alone! In fact, most dieters don't maintain the weight they have lost for more than a year. But in this book, I show you why most people regain their weight and what steps you need to take to permanently keep your weight (and belly!) off.

The cherry on top is that this book contains more than 40 delicious and easy-to-make recipes as well as individualized meal plans, detailed maintenance plans, and extensive exercise routines to blast away belly fat for everyone from the couch potato to the advanced exerciser.

My guess is that if you have tried unsuccessfully to lose belly fat in the past, you may struggle with specific areas, such as food cravings or eating out. Instead of reading this book in order page by page, you can instead skip right to the areas you need to focus on the most. That's right, you don't have to start with Chapter 1 and read straight through to get the benefits. This book is set up so you can read it in any order that appeals to you and still get all the information you need to achieve the flat belly of your dreams.

## **Conventions Used in This Book**

Although I hear the word repeatedly throughout the day, I really hate the word "diet." A diet is something you go on and off again. But going back to your old habits gets you nowhere. It just helps you gain back all the weight you lost, which is bad for your health (maybe even worse than being overweight in the first place). Even



(maybe even worse than being overweight in the first place). Even though the word “diet” is used in this book title and throughout the book, I want you to think of it in a different way than you normally would. The Belly Fat Diet isn’t a diet to go on and off; it’s a lifestyle.

Because the Belly Fat Diet is something you put into effect for life, I stress throughout this book that slip-ups and occasional splurges are fine. I even encourage them! If you don’t deal with slip-ups every now and then, you won’t learn how to successfully maintain your weight loss in the long term. So when you see the word “diet” throughout this book, remember that it refers to a lifestyle change, not the unrealistic goal of eating perfectly (which can’t be maintained).

Here are a few other conventions that I also put to use throughout this book:

- ✓ New or technical terms appear in *italics* and are followed by a definition.
- ✓ **Bold** indicates the action part of numbered steps and highlights the key words in bulleted lists.
- ✓ Web addresses are set in monospace so you can easily spot them.
- 🍅 The tomato icon to the left of this paragraph appears next to the titles of vegetarian recipes in the “Recipes in This Chapter” lists at the beginning of chapters that include recipes.

When this book was printed, some web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven’t put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So when using one of these web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn’t exist.

## What You’re Not to Read

I’ve packed this book full of helpful information on losing belly fat, maintaining weight loss, and making healthy lifestyle changes.

maintaining weight loss, and making healthy lifestyle changes.

However, throughout the book, I include some additional reference material, fun facts, and technical info. These tidbits are highlighted as sidebars (gray shaded boxes) or are marked with the Technical Stuff icon. This information helps to enhance your overall understanding of belly fat and provide you with more background information, but you can skip over it without missing anything essential.

## Foolish Assumptions

I didn't want this book to be overweight, so when I sat down to write it, I made some assumptions about you, the reader, so I could narrow the focus and give you only what you need. Here are the assumptions I made:

- ✓ I assume that you have excess belly fat you want to lose.
- ✓ I assume that you're ready to get in the best shape of your life and that you're committed to making some lifestyle changes to get you there.
- ✓ I assume that, like me, you love food and want a book that provides you with recipes for great-tasting meals, snacks, and desserts that can also help you lose your gut.
- ✓ I assume that like most people you have a hectic lifestyle and, even though you're serious about wanting to lose your belly and get healthy, you don't have hours and hours every day to commit to it, so you want simple plans that are easy to implement and stick with.

## How This Book Is Organized

*Belly Fat Diet For Dummies* is organized into five specific parts to help make it easy for you to find the information you're looking for. Here's a brief description of what you can find in each part of the book.

## **Part I: The 4-1-1 on Belly Fat and the Skinny on the Diet**

Part I starts by breaking down what belly fat is, what causes an excess of it, and what impact it can have on your health. In this part, I also help you identify your body type, which is vital to knowing exactly how to effectively shrink your belly. I also show you how to determine whether you have excess belly fat (even if you're at a healthy body weight!) and how to know when you've achieved a healthy waistline. I wrap up the part by outlining the principles of the Belly Fat Diet plan and whom it's appropriate for.

## **Part II: Working Your Way to a Flatter Belly**

I start this part by helping you get prepared for your Belly Fat Diet plan so you can be as successful as possible. Next, I describe the key components of your plan and outline the various plans, including how to determine what plan is most appropriate for your needs. This part also provides you with specific meal plan guidelines and sample meal plans.

This part closes with a chapter on belly-blasting workout routines. First I explain the impact that exercise has on belly fat and provide you with simple strategies to help you get moving, regardless of your exercise history. Then I provide you with a detailed workout plan and effective exercises (complete with detailed descriptions and pictures) that blast belly fat and tone and tighten your abs.

## **Part III: Cooking Up Some Healthy and Tasty Recipes**

What's the point in trying to lose weight and shrink your belly if you can't enjoy yourself while you do it? Right. There is no point in that. Part III starts off by helping you understand how to stock and

prepare your kitchen and pantry so you can be successful while saving time, money, and energy.

The remaining chapters in the part provide you with delicious and easy-to-prepare recipes that you're sure to love. The best part is that the recipes are great for your whole family, so you won't have to prepare separate meals to be successful.

## **Part IV: Overcoming Obstacles and Managing Your Progress**

Losing weight is never easy, but keeping it off can be even more difficult. That's why Part IV addresses the most common challenges and pitfalls that can throw you off track when following your Belly Fat Diet plan. This part addresses specific dietary concerns, such as dealing with cravings and emotional eating, handling boredom with your meals, and losing belly fat while following a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle.

This part also discusses how to eat at restaurants, at social gatherings, and on food-centered holidays while still losing weight and keeping it off. The part concludes with a detailed plan for permanent weight loss and strategies on exactly what steps you need to take if you start to see yourself regaining any weight you have lost so you can keep your flat belly for life!

## Part V: The Part of Tens

Part V provides a quick breakdown of helpful and fun information to allow you to achieve and maintain a flat belly. You find chapters that list the ten foods that can bloat your belly. I also list the ten nutrients that pack a powerful fight against belly fat.

## Icons Used in This Book

As you read through this book, you see icons — small images in the margins — that are designed to call your attention to specific pieces of information. Here are the icons I use along with a description of what they mean:



When you see this icon, you know you're about to get helpful tips and practical advice to help shrink your belly and promote effective weight loss.



The text next to this icon typically contains important information that helps you stay on track with your long-term weight loss goals.



I use this icon as a red flag. It draws your attention to common weight loss obstacles that can sidetrack your progress.



This icon identifies helpful information that increases your

background knowledge about belly fat; however, this information isn't essential to your basic understanding of belly fat and how to effectively lose it. You can skip these bits of text without missing any information vital to your Belly Fat Diet plan.

## Where to Go from Here

If you aren't quite sure what belly fat is and how to identify whether you have too much of it, I recommend starting in Chapter 2. If you already know all about belly fat, its health dangers, and your body type, skip to Chapter 4 to begin understanding the basic principles of the Belly Fat Diet. If you have already lost your belly but need help maintaining your results, head to Part IV to check out the customized maintenance plan to achieve a flat belly for life. No matter what topic you're interested in, you can flip through the table of contents or index to find what you're looking for.

***One last thing:*** This book has a companion website at [www.dummies.com/go/bellyfat](http://www.dummies.com/go/bellyfat). Here, you can find additional information that I wasn't able to squeeze into the book.

## Part I

# The 4-1-1 on Belly Fat and the Skinny on the Diet

### The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"That sound's not indigestion, it's your belt screaming for mercy."

## In this part . . .

Obesity rates are steadily climbing, and with them, so are the inches around our waistlines. In this part, I show you how to determine whether you have too much belly fat. I also explain exactly what belly fat is and why it's so dangerous to your health. Every body is different, and so is every belly. I help you gain an understanding of your unique body type so you can determine what led to your excess belly fat and figure out how to shed it for good! Finally, this



excess belly fat and figure out how to shed it for good. Finally, this part outlines the principles of the Belly Fat Diet plan, who it's appropriate for, and how it works, so you can start on your way to achieving the flat belly of your dreams (and keeping it that way!).

# Chapter 1

## Taking Control of Your Waistline and Your Health

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Identifying the risks of excess belly fat
  - ▶ Checking out your weight and waist circumference
  - ▶ Taking control of your health and waistline with the Belly Fat Diet plan
  - ▶ Cooking your way to a flatter belly
  - ▶ Working through obstacles and maintaining your efforts
- 

The next time you're in a public place, look around. What do you see? Almost everywhere you look you can see expanding waistlines and bellies protruding over belts. In fact, it's harder to spot a person at a healthy body weight than it is to find one who isn't. The United States is in the midst of a very real and very dangerous epidemic. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 63 percent of Americans over the age of 20 are now obese, and another 127 million people are considered overweight. That's the majority of the country! And since 1980, the prevalence of obesity in children and teens has tripled! The scariest part is that so many people are now overweight that it almost appears normal and can be difficult to tell what a truly healthy body weight even is.

The excess weight that these people have is only half the battle, however. When folks are overweight and obese, they often have an increased amount of visceral fat, or belly fat, deep inside their abdominal walls. This fat is extremely dangerous to their health. In this chapter, I help you understand belly fat and get you on the right path to losing fat and weight the healthy (and permanent!) way.

# Exploring the Dangers of Belly Fat

The concern about being overweight or obese isn't just about looks. Sure everyone wants to look great in a bathing suit, but your health is more important. Being just slightly overweight significantly increases your risk for disease and premature death. And where you hold your excess weight matters even more. Even if you're at a relatively healthy body weight, holding excess fat in your abdominal area causes you to have an increased waistline and thus be at a much greater risk of health complications. So much so, in fact, that a comprehensive European study found that every 2-inch increase in your waistline increased mortality by 13 percent in women and as much as 17 percent in men.

The most dangerous fat of all is visceral fat, which is often referred to as *belly fat*. This fat is different from the subcutaneous fat that you can see on your body and pinch between your fingers. Visceral fat is the layer of fat deep inside your body that forms between your organs. Even though you can't see it, you know it's there if you have an increased amount of subcutaneous fat.

The more visceral fat you have, the more toxic it is to your body. Visceral fat is so toxic that research has linked it to everything from an increased risk of heart disease, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and gallstones to increases in certain cancers and dementia. In Chapter 2, I break down exactly what visceral, or belly, fat is, what causes it, and the health implications it can cause. And throughout this book, I explain how to make simple changes to banish belly fat from your body so you can look great and feel great as well!

The weight loss and diet industry is a billion-dollar industry. People of all ages and from all economic backgrounds shell out hundreds and thousands of dollars for "quick fixes" to lose weight and belly fat. But as obesity rates continue to skyrocket, it's clear that these quick fixes don't work.

Thankfully, a simple and effective solution to permanently lose weight and belly fat is just waiting for you. It's called the *Belly Fat Diet*. Throughout this book, I help you discover exactly what contributed to your weight gain and belly fat and provide you with an individualized program that works quickly and easily to provide you with dramatic and permanent weight loss results. If you're ready to take control of your health and waistline once and for all, the Belly Fat Diet is your answer!

## Analyzing Your Weight and Waistline

Belly fat is some pretty scary stuff, so you need to identify whether you're at risk. Then you have to determine what you can do to decrease your belly fat as much as possible. Your risk isn't just determined by your weight, however. It's important to keep the size of your waistline in mind, too. Even if you're at a healthy body weight, you may still have too much belly fat.

A recent study by Statistics Canada found that 21 percent of women considered to be at a normal weight were at an increased risk of health complications due to their levels of abdominal fat. So even though your weight on the scale may look okay, you may still be at risk of health conditions brought on by excess belly fat.



Waist circumference is a key measurement that many individuals don't focus on. The research on the health risks associated with abdominal fat is so compelling that it may be time to focus less on the number on the scale and more on the measurement of your waistline.

In Chapter 3, I show you the simple ways you can determine whether you're at risk for having too much belly fat. I show you how to determine your body mass index (BMI) as well as your waist

to determine your body mass index (BMI) as well as your waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio so you can see what your belly fat risk is and how to address it. (Your waist-to-hip ratio correlates with increased risk of heart attacks, so it's an important number to know.) I also show you what an ideal waist measurement is for you and your body type so you know when you've reached your goal.



No two bellies are exactly the same. Many different causes of belly fat exist, so you need to determine the cause of your belly fat so you can work on decreasing it and preventing it from returning. In Chapter 3, I outline various body types and how they store belly fat so you can determine your type and what you need to do to lose inches and pounds.

## Getting Started on the Path to a Flat Belly

After you've determined whether you have excess belly fat and what exactly brought it on, you're ready to start making changes to banish your belly for good and feel great from the inside out! In Chapter 4, I outline exactly how the Belly Fat Diet plan works, and more specifically, how it works for your individual body. I also help you understand exactly how the Belly Fat Diet plan blasts belly fat, improves health, and helps increase your energy level.

The first thing you need to do to be successful with your Belly Fat Diet plan is to prepare yourself ahead of time. You can't be successful with a weight loss program unless you plan ahead. If you're starting to feel overwhelmed, take a deep breath. Chapter 5 walks you through everything you need to do to be fully prepared to start your Belly Fat Diet plan. I break down the steps you need to take to be successful, including dietary and lifestyle changes. For instance, you can transition to whole grains, manage your stress, and get adequate sleep. Both your diet and your lifestyle play important roles in managing your belly fat.

In this section, I explain the basic principles of the Belly Fat Diet plan. I show you how this plan specifically targets belly fat, promoting weight loss, decreasing disease risk, and improving how you look and feel.



Throughout this book, I stress that your Belly Fat Diet plan isn't a diet that you go on and off. Instead, it's a lifestyle change. If you make quick, dramatic changes and then go right back to your old behaviors after a few weeks or months, you'll pack on the pounds all over again. Instead, I show you how to make gradual, practical, and doable lifestyle changes that you can implement for life.

## Choosing a plan

As I mention earlier, no two bellies are exactly alike. So the same program to reduce belly fat and body weight won't work for everyone. I have designed three individualized programs in the Belly Fat Diet so you can follow the one that works best for you and helps you achieve your ultimate health and weight loss goals. These individualized programs make the Belly Fat Diet unique. The three plans you can choose from include the following:

- ✓ **The Turbo-Charged plan:** This plan is perfect for the person who wants quick and permanent results. It's also great for the person who has seen few or no results from prior failed dieting attempts. I like to call these folks "resistant dieters." It's the strictest of the meal plans, but it also provides you with the most rapid results.
- ✓ **The Moderation plan:** This plan is designed for the individual who wants consistent, steady weight loss without feeling terribly deprived. It provides a great balance of healthy nutrients that help you feel satisfied while shedding those unwanted pounds.

- ✓ **The Gradual-Change plan:** This plan works best for the individual who's at a healthy body weight but has a waist circumference that indicates a risk for health conditions associated with excess abdominal fat. It's also ideal for those who don't want to go headlong into weight loss or who have medical conditions that require them to lose weight more slowly. The Gradual-Change plan allows you to make small changes over time that lead to big results.

Chapter 7 outlines these plans in detail and provides tips on planning and preparing for your plan. Chapter 8 provides menus for each of the plans.

## Getting some exercise

After you determine which Belly Fat Diet plan is most approximate for your situation, you need to start considering the best exercises to burn up belly fat. The truth is that you can lose belly fat and body weight through dietary changes alone. However, even when you're at an ideal body weight and have achieved an ideal waist circumference, exercise is still vital to your health. So regardless of whether you want to lose weight, you still need to add physical activity to your daily routine.

The Belly Fat Diet workout plan isn't difficult. You don't need any fancy equipment, and you don't have to join a gym. You just have to commit to putting a few minutes aside a few times a week to get active. In addition to the health benefits, getting active and staying active (in addition to following your Belly Fat Diet plan) will have you achieving your flat belly results quicker than you ever thought possible! And if you need more motivation, think of this: Multiple studies have shown that even without dietary changes, individuals who moderately exercise a few times per week showed significant losses in visceral fat.

The belly-blasting exercises outlined in Chapter 10 target belly fat, burning it up and toning your midsection for a sleeker, slimmer you. And I provide exercises for everyone. If you've never exercised



before, the Phase 1 exercises can help you strengthen your midsection and reveal muscles you didn't even know you had. If you're an avid exerciser, the Phase 2 exercises challenge your muscles in new and unique ways, helping you achieve amazing results.

## **Preparing Meals to Flatten Your Belly**

What good would a weight loss plan be if you couldn't eat foods that tasted good? Luckily, you don't have to worry about that issue with your Belly Fat Diet plan. The recipes you can make while losing weight will surprise you and have your taste buds rejoicing. And the best part is that they can be simple and easy to make! You don't need to purchase hundreds of ingredients you've never heard of or slave away over the stove for hours in order to make food that will help melt away belly fat. In Part III, I show you more than 40 recipes you can experiment with.

But first, before you get down to business with the recipes, you need to stock up your kitchen and pantry so you have everything you need on hand to cook for your Belly Fat Diet plan. Chapter 11 helps you tackle this preparation. I provide you with simple tips and tricks to make planning and preparing meals as quick and easy as possible. After all, if your meal plan is too time consuming or takes too much effort, it isn't practical and won't be something you stick with.

In Chapters 12 through 15, I provide you with tasty recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even snacks and desserts. That's right — the Belly Fat Diet plan encourages you to snack and have dessert! Does it get much better than that? All the recipes I include in this book taste great and are loaded with belly-shrinking nutrients. For instance, seasonings like cayenne pepper, cinnamon, and turmeric are proven belly fat fighters and are incorporated in great-tasting ways into many recipes. Nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids,

monounsaturated fats, and fiber also find their way into many of the recipes throughout this book for a powerful fat-fighting punch!

## **Fighting Through Challenges to Achieve and Maintain a Flat Belly**

Achieving your ideal body weight and a flat belly isn't always easy. You may hit some roadblocks along the way, which can cause you to get off track with your Belly Fat Diet plan. But don't worry. In Part IV, I help you identify the most common obstacles you may encounter. I also provide you with the tools you need to overcome these challenges so you can stay on track and reach your weight loss and health goals and keep the weight off permanently!

In Chapter 16, I outline some of the most common pitfalls and slip-ups that may occur as you follow your Belly Fat Diet plan. I show you the best ways to avoid these challenges in the first place and also how to fix them and get right back on track with your plan if they do occur.

A big concern for those trying to lose weight and improve health is eating away from home. Whether you're going out to your favorite restaurant for a nice meal or eating at Grandma's house for a holiday dinner, you have to make smart choices so you don't get off track. After all, you aren't going to eat every meal at home for the rest of your life. In Chapter 17, I outline strategies you can use to stay on track whenever you eat away from home.

## **Maintaining your losses long term**

A huge struggle that many dieters face is maintaining their losses. Losing weight and belly fat mean nothing if you don't make those results permanent. Fad diets are particularly problematic in this regard. You lose weight quickly with these diets, but because you don't implement lifestyle changes, you go right back to old habits and regain the weight.

I don't want you to set yourself up for failure, so I devote an entire chapter to maintaining your weight loss and belly fat losses. In Chapter 18, I show you how to identify when you've reached your weight loss goals, how to know whether you've hit a true plateau, and what to do to break through. I also explain the strategies you can implement daily to make sure your results last permanently. I even include a detailed meal plan to help you maintain your weight as well as instructions on how to adjust if you notice your weight beginning to creep back up.

## Chapter 3

# Step Away from the Scale: Examining Your Health and Body Type

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Calculating your BMI and other health-related numbers
  - ▶ Identifying your body type and working with it
- 

In the same way you may research your family medical history to determine whether you're at risk for certain health conditions, you also need to research your current health and physical body type to identify whether your body size, composition, and proportions are increasing your risk for future medical complications. After all, if you solely focus on your weight on the scale, you may be missing the bigger picture.

For instance, someone who is of a normal weight can still have a large amount of visceral fat, in some instances, more than another person who is slightly overweight. And the same goes for someone who's "overweight" on a scale. That person may have a large amount of muscle mass or a heavy bone structure, but he may have a low percentage of body fat.

Think about an NFL football player. If you were to just look at his body weight on the scale versus his height, without seeing him, it may seem as though he is overweight or even obese. However, if you were to just look at him with the naked eye, he may look trim and toned. This seeming discrepancy is because a highly conditioned athlete has a large amount of muscle, which weighs more on the scale. The number on the scale tells nothing of his amount of visceral fat or risk for medical complications.

The point is this: Belly fat can be dangerous to your health, and you don't have to be overweight to have too large a percentage of it. You have to consider the whole picture no matter what your scale says. So in this chapter, I show you how to calculate your body's numbers, including body mass index (BMI), waist-to-hip ratio, and health levels like cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose. Finally, I help you determine exactly what body type category you fall into so you can be on your way to losing that stubborn belly fat for good!

## **Determining Your Body's Health Numbers**

Relying solely on your scale or mirror to determine whether you're healthy isn't a good idea. Neither of these methods examines how much visceral fat you have and how it may create complications down the road. Although you don't want to disregard the scale entirely, you do want to be aware that it's not telling you the whole story. Other numbers — such as your BMI, waist-to-hip ratio, and your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose — are much more important for you to focus on. I explain each of these numbers and how to calculate and analyze them in the following sections.

### **Assessing your BMI**

Your body mass index (BMI) is a formula that takes into account your height versus your weight to determine whether you're at a healthy weight. Although BMI can be a fairly reliable indicator of body fat in most people, some exceptions exist. For instance, the NFL player (or other top athlete) with a very high level of muscle mass may have an elevated BMI without actually having a high level of body fat.

Although BMI doesn't measure body fat directly, research has indicated that it does correspond with direct measures of body fat, which include underwater weighing and dual-energy X-ray

absorptiometry (DXA). Because it isn't practical for you or your regular clinician to weigh you underwater or perform a DXA scan, BMI is an easy, inexpensive way to see whether you're overweight or have a high percentage of body fat.



To determine your BMI, use the chart in Figure 3-1. The numbers on the left-hand side correlate with your height in inches. The numbers within the chart correlate with your body weight in pounds. To determine your BMI, find your height in inches, and then move your finger to the right until you reach your approximate weight in pounds. After you find where your height and weight intersect, move your finger upward to the top of the chart to see what your BMI is. For instance, if you are 67 inches in height and weigh 185 pounds, your BMI is 29. If your exact weight isn't listed, simply go to the closest one.



You can also use an online BMI calculator to get your exact BMI. The calculator on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website is reliable and easy to find. Simply go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and search for BMI calculator in the search box on the homepage. You may be able to find a BMI calculator app for your smartphone or tablet as well.

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**Figure 3-1:** A BMI chart.

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BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40
Height (in.)	Weight (lb.)													
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	173	198
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	197	225
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	207	243	278
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	258	294
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	265	302
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	272	311
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328

BMI has five categories. As you can see in Table 3-1, your BMI can fall into one of the following categories: underweight, healthy weight, overweight, obese, or morbidly obese. Your goal is to keep your BMI within the healthy weight range, because weighing too much or too little can increase your risk of many health complications.



Don't get too upset or overly confident about your BMI just yet. Even individuals with a healthy BMI can have too much belly fat, so you need to assess your weight and waist in multiple ways.

<b>Table 3-1 BMI Categories and Risk</b>		
<i><b>BMI</b></i>	<i><b>Weight Status</b></i>	<i><b>Risk</b></i>
18.5 or less	Underweight	Increased risk
18.6–24.9	Healthy weight	Low risk
25.0–29.9	Overweight	Increased risk
30.0–39.9	Obese	High risk
40.0 or more	Morbid obesity	Very high risk

## Measuring your waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio

Your waist circumference is an additional way to determine whether you have an increased amount of fat around your belly and whether you're at an increased health risk. The National Institutes of Health says that a high waist circumference is associated with an increased risk for health conditions like hypertension, elevated blood lipids, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Even if your BMI has indicated you're at a healthy weight (see the preceding section), it's possible to have too large of a waist circumference. On the other hand, if you're muscular and have a high BMI but suspect you have a lower body fat percentage, waist circumference is a great way to determine your risk.



To help reduce your risk of medical complications, your waist circumference should be:

- ✓ Less than 35 inches for women



✓ Less than 40 inches for men

To accurately measure your waist circumference, follow these steps:

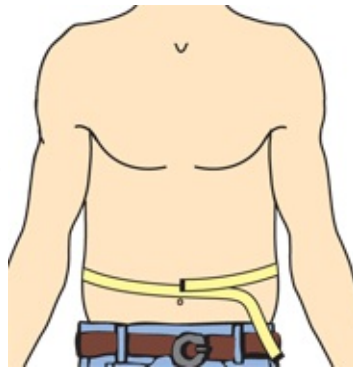
**1. Locate your upper hip bone.**

You can find the proper spot by placing your hands around your waist, squeezing slightly, and then moving your fingers downward until you feel the top curve of your hips.

**2. Place a tape measure around your bare stomach just above the upper hip bone (as seen in Figure 3-2).**

Make sure the measuring tape is parallel to the floor (slanting can falsely increase your measurement). Also ensure that the tape measure is snug to your body, but not so tight that it compresses the skin. Exhale while measuring and relax your abdomen — sucking in is not allowed!

**Figure 3-2:**  
Measuring  
your waist  
circumference.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*

After you determine your waist circumference, you're ready to check out your *waist-to-hip ratio*, which is a measurement that compares the size of your hips to the size of your waist. The smaller your waist is in comparison to your hips, the lower your risk for heart disease. Even if you're overweight and have a high waist circumference, your waist-to-hip ratio is an important measurement. If your waist circumference is high, but your waist-to-hip ratio is low, you may have less of a risk of heart disease than another individual with both an elevated waist circumference and elevated

waist-to-hip ratio.



The waist-to-hip ratio is especially important for individuals at a normal body weight. This measurement is an excellent way to see whether you're storing too high a percentage of your body weight in your abdomen.

Follow these steps to determine your waist-to-hip ratio:

**1. Using a tape measure, measure the circumference of your hips.**

First look in a mirror and identify the widest part of your buttocks. Then place the tape measure at this location and measure around the circumference of your hips and buttocks.

**2. Using the waist circumference measurement that you took earlier in the section, calculate your waist-to-hip ratio by dividing your waist circumference by your hip measurement.**

After you've determined your waist-to-hip ratio, use Table 3-2 to check your level of risk.

Table 3-2      Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Risk		
<i>Male Waist-to-Hip Ratio</i>	<i>Female Waist-to-Hip Ratio</i>	<i>Health Risk</i>
0.95 or below	0.80 or below	Low risk
0.96–1.0	0.81–0.85	Moderate risk
1.0+	0.85+	High risk

## Checking your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels

Besides knowing your external size numbers, such as your BMI and waist-to-hip ratio (discussed earlier in the chapter), you also want to know your internal numbers when evaluating your health risk.

These numbers include your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels. If you have an increased amount of belly fat, you may be more at risk for diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

To assess your risk and start taking action to improve your health, schedule an appointment with your physician to determine your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels. I discuss each in detail in the following sections.

## Cholesterol

*Cholesterol* is a waxy, fatlike substance produced by the liver and found in all the body's cells. It's also found in many of the foods you eat. Cholesterol is needed to make vitamin D as well as many hormones. In your body, substances called *lipoproteins* package and transport cholesterol to your cells.

Two kinds of lipoproteins carry cholesterol in your body: *High-density lipoproteins* (HDL) and *low-density lipoproteins* (LDL). Having a healthy ratio of these lipoproteins is important to your health.

- ✓ **HDL cholesterol:** Otherwise known as the “happy” or good cholesterol, HDL cholesterol is the one you want to have a high amount of. This form of cholesterol is like a garbage truck, picking up and transporting cholesterol back to the liver. The liver then removes the cholesterol from your body.
- ✓ **LDL cholesterol:** This cholesterol, referred to as “lousy” or bad cholesterol, is the one you want to have less of. High levels of this cholesterol can lead to a buildup of cholesterol in your arteries, which over time may lead to deadly blockages. Because elevated levels of cholesterol may increase your risk of heart disease, you need to monitor your levels.

In addition to knowing your levels of HDL and LDL cholesterol, you also want to assess the following two additional blood lipids:

- ✓ **Total cholesterol:** *Total cholesterol* is a measurement of HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and other lipid components. Elevated total cholesterol levels are also an indicator of heart disease, so you want to aim to keep this level within an optimum range.

- ✓ **Triglycerides:** *Triglycerides* are the fats flowing through your bloodstream from the food you eat. Elevated levels of triglycerides are linked with an increased risk of heart disease as well as type 2 diabetes, so it's essential to lower elevated triglyceride levels.



You should aim to have your levels of total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides checked annually or more often if elevated. Your doctor checks your cholesterol by taking a fasting blood sample. Refer to Table 3-3 to see what your cholesterol levels should be.

<b>Table 3-3                      Cholesterol Levels and Their Risks</b>		
<b><i>Blood Lipid</i></b>	<b><i>Range</i></b>	<b><i>Risk Category</i></b>
Total cholesterol	<170 mg/dL	Very Low
	<200 mg/dL	Low
	200–239 mg/dL	Moderately high
	240 mg/dL or higher	High
LDL cholesterol	<100 mg/dL	Very Low
	100–129 mg/dL	Low
	130–159 mg/dL	Borderline high
	160–189 mg/dL	High
	190 mg/dL or higher	Very high
HDL cholesterol	<40 mg/dL (men)	High
	<50 mg/dL (women)	High
	40–59 mg/dL (men)	Low
	50–59 mg/dL (women)	Low
	>60 mg/dL (men and women)	Very Low
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dL	Low
	150–199 mg/dL	Moderate
	200–499 mg/dL	High
	500 mg/dL or higher	Very high

## Blood pressure

*Blood pressure* is just what it sounds like: It's the measurement of the blood's force against the wall of the arteries. Two numbers make up your blood pressure: systolic pressure and diastolic pressure.

*Systolic pressure* is a measurement taken as the heart beats, whereas the *diastolic pressure* is the measurement as the heart relaxes in

between beats. The measurement is written as the systolic number over the diastolic number.



Elevated blood pressure (also known as *hypertension*), if not controlled, can increase risk for heart disease, stroke, and even kidney disease. So it's important to have your blood pressure checked at least once annually and more often if elevated.

Table 3-4 shows the categories for blood pressure in adults. The systolic and diastolic measurements are considered separately, so it's important to note that if one number is normal and the other is elevated, you're still at an increased risk.

<b>Table 3-4                      Categories of Blood Pressure in Adults</b>	
<b><i>Category</i></b>	<b><i>Blood Pressure (Systolic or Diastolic)</i></b>
Normal	<120 mmHg or <80 mmHg
Pre-hypertension	120–139 mmHg or 80–89 mmHg
Stage 1 hypertension	140–159 mmHg or 90–99 mmHg
Stage 2 hypertension	160 mmHg or above or 100 mmHg or above

*Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute*

## Blood sugar

Elevated blood sugar (glucose) is a sign of insulin resistance, a precursor to type 2 diabetes. High amounts of glucose in the bloodstream can lead to serious health consequences, including diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease.



Having your blood glucose checked on a regular basis is key to preventing and controlling diabetes. If your blood glucose is found to be elevated, dietary changes, exercise, and decreasing belly fat have been shown to help reverse insulin resistance and lower blood glucose levels. Have your glucose levels checked annually or more regularly if they're elevated. Your doctor

checks your blood sugar levels by taking a fasting blood sample. Table 3-5 shows the normal range for blood glucose when fasting.

<b>Table 3-5                      Fasting Blood Glucose Levels</b>	
<i>Glucose Levels</i>	<i>Category</i>
Normal	70–99 mg/dL
Pre-diabetic levels	100–126 mg/dL
Diabetic levels	>126 mg/dL

## **Pulling the info together: Determining your risk for health complications**

After you've assessed your BMI, waist circumference, waist-to-hip ratio, blood pressure, and blood levels of cholesterol and blood sugar (all discussed earlier in the chapter), you can determine your risk of health consequences like heart disease and diabetes.

Knowing which of these areas is placing you at risk allows you to begin addressing these areas and start making changes to improve your levels and your health.



To determine your current health risk level, count up the number of health assessment levels that are above normal, including your BMI, waist circumference, waist-to-hip ratio, total cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, HDL-cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels. Then use Table 3-6 to see which category you fall into.

As you begin following your Belly Fat Diet, revamping your meal plan, making healthy lifestyle changes, and decreasing your waistline, these levels will begin to improve, and you can decrease your health risks dramatically.

<b>Table 3-6                      Health Assessment Levels</b>	
<i>Number of Health Assessment Levels Above Normal</i>	<i>Health Risk</i>
0	Low
1–2	Moderate
3–4	High
5 or more	Very high

## Identifying Your Body Type

If you look at the people around you, you'll notice many different body shapes. Some people tend to carry weight in their legs and hips, some hold more weight in their stomachs, and still others tend to gain weight all over. You'll also notice that almost any person who's above an ideal weight carries at least some excess weight in the belly. However, how this excess weight makes its way to the belly varies depending on the person, his genetics, and his situation.

It's important to understand what body type you are in order to start losing your belly fat once and for all. In the following sections, I show you the most common body types and how to deal with your type.

### Apple versus pear type

An *apple-shaped* person is someone who holds a large amount of fat in the abdomen, has a large waist, and has generally slimmer legs and arms. If you're an apple-shaped person, you tend to have a large amount of visceral fat, increasing your risk for heart disease.

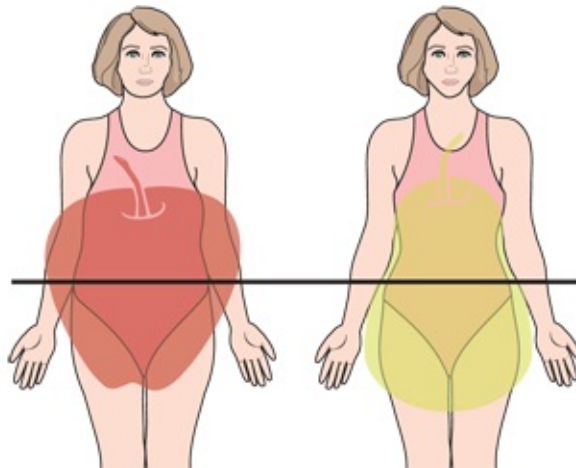
A *pear-shaped* body type tends to have a smaller waist with larger hips and legs. Although an overweight pear-shaped person may still have higher than ideal levels of visceral fat, her risk for heart disease tends to be lower because she stores more fat in her extremities. As a result, she has less toxic fat surrounding her organs and producing dangerous hormones and byproducts. You can see what each of these body shapes looks like in Figure 3-3.

Although it's important for every body type to maintain a healthy weight and lose abdominal fat, it's even more critical for you to lose weight to prevent future disease risks if you're an apple-shaped type. The Belly Fat Diet plan is perfect for you and your type, because the weight loss in this plan is specifically geared toward losing your excessive belly fat.



Genetically you may always have thinner arms and legs when compared to your midsection, but, if you're an apple shape, it's critical you strive to keep your waist circumference below the recommended levels (which are less than 35 inches in women and less than 40 inches in men).

**Figure 3-3:**  
Apple-versus  
pear-shaped  
body types.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*

## Slim type

The slim type can be a surprisingly dangerous type. If you're a slim person and at a normal weight for your height, you may not think you have excessive abdominal fat. The truth is that even slim people can have too high a percentage of visceral fat, putting them at risk for complications associated with this excess weight around the middle.



If you're already at or close to an ideal weight, be sure to assess your body proportions. Take out a tape measure and determine your waist-to-hip ratio (see the earlier section "Measuring your waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio") and use Table 3-2 to see whether you're at risk. If you're at risk even though you're already thin, following the Belly Fat Diet plan can be beneficial to you because it can help you reduce body fat in your abdominal area, helping to improve your waist-to-hip ratio.

## After-pregnancy type

If you just had a new baby and are stressing over your bulging stomach, take heart. It can take time after delivery for your belly to go back to normal. Remember that not only is normal weight gain associated with pregnancy, but stomach muscles have been stretched and expanded for nine months. The Belly Fat Diet can help you return to your pre-baby body in an appropriate amount of time.



Even though the Belly Fat Diet can be beneficial to after-pregnancy types, you must be aware of some precautions:

- ✓ **If you just gave birth and are breastfeeding, don't reduce your food intake too much or lose weight too quickly.** Doing so can reduce your milk production for your baby. Allow yourself time to establish a breastfeeding schedule with your baby before implementing a weight loss routine. Make sure to consult your physician before making changes to your diet while breastfeeding. I generally recommend waiting between six to eight weeks after delivery before starting a weight loss plan.

Choosing the belly-burning foods recommended in the Belly Fat Diet is terrific for both you and your baby, because they're packed with essential nutrients. When choosing a Belly Fat Diet plan, follow the Gradual-Change plan, which provides adequate calories to prevent a decrease in milk production. (See Chapter 7 for details.)

- ✓ **If you just had a baby but aren't breastfeeding, you can aim for a faster rate of weight loss, but you must have realistic expectations.** A new baby brings along multiple challenges, such as lack of sleep, decreased meal planning, and even stress-related eating. To help you maximize your Belly Fat Diet efforts, focus on behaviors other than just those related to food, which may impact belly fat and make it more challenging to lose.

For example, getting adequate sleep, planning ahead to have belly-friendly meals and snacks on hand at all times, and implementing stress-management techniques are key in helping you lose belly fat and returning to your pre-baby body quickly and easily.

## Post-menopause type

The term *middle-age spread* is something all women dread hearing. Here's how it works: As women approach menopause, body fat tends to favor the upper body over the lower half, and as the body fat begins to increase, so does the midsection. Even women who stay the same weight throughout menopause may notice a shift in body proportions by gaining a few inches around the waist. Most of the shifting can be attributed to hormone changes associated with menopause, leading to an increase in body fat and a loss of lean muscle mass. **Remember:** Even though some of these changes may seem inevitable, you aren't predestined to a life of increased belly fat just because you're going through or have gone through menopause.



If you're the post-menopause type, you must not only follow your Belly Fat Diet plan to promote weight loss, but you also must include exercise on a regular basis. Because much of the increase in belly fat during the post-menopausal timeframe is due to increased body fat and loss of lean muscle, rebuilding

lost muscle is key. Why? Muscle mass makes up a large percentage of your overall metabolism. So if you start to lose muscle mass, your metabolism begins to slow. Even if you eat the exact same foods everyday your whole life, you will inevitably begin to gain weight during menopause because your body is burning fewer calories every day due to this decrease in metabolism. Luckily, the Belly Fat Diet can help you to rev up your metabolism, increasing the calories you burn daily and helping to decrease belly fat and overall weight.

Make sure to regularly include in your routine the belly-blasting workouts in Chapter 10 to help rebuild lean muscle. Also focus on the ways to rev up your metabolism that are discussed in Chapter 6.

## The male type

Have you been noticing that your six-pack is slowly transitioning into a keg? Men are more likely than women to have excessive levels of belly fat. And, as a result, men have a higher likelihood of diseases and disorders linked with visceral fat. Lifestyle choices, such as inactivity, poor diet, and excessive alcohol intake, can cause your body to store excessive visceral fat.



Men, similar to women, start to lose muscle mass as they age, especially if they're inactive. In your 40s and beyond, changes in testosterone and estrogen levels may make your body more inclined to lose lean muscle mass and store fat around your waistline.

To decrease your excess belly fat, start being more cautious about your food choices. Make sure you're choosing belly-blasting foods and avoiding foods that can promote increased fat storage. Also moderate your alcohol intake (no more than two drinks per day), manage your stress, and increase your daily physical activity levels. By making the simple changes outlined in the Belly Fat Diet, you'll be saying bye-bye keg and hello six-pack before you know it.

## **Chapter 4**

# **How the Belly Fat Diet Can Work for You**

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## ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Taking a quick look at the Belly Fat Diet basics
  - ▶ Explaining how the diet works
  - ▶ Understanding the diet's philosophy
  - ▶ Identifying the diet's health benefits
- 

As you get started with the Belly Fat Diet, you'll notice it isn't like any diet that you have ever followed before. Why? Because diets don't work. And I don't want you to invest time, money, and emotion into something that isn't going to work. Restrictive diets may help you lose weight rapidly, but that weight won't stay off. And what's worse is that being too restrictive in your eating can actually lower your metabolism, making it easier to not only gain back the original weight you lost, but to gain back even more.

I don't want this for you. Instead, I want you to learn how to lose weight in a healthy way, without being ridiculously restrictive, and to learn how to manage your weight for good. As much as everyone wants to look good in jeans, being healthy is the most important thing. Reducing belly fat is key for your health because it can decrease the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and even certain cancers. I designed the Belly Fat Diet to help you not only look great, but also to feel great and stay healthy as well.

In this chapter, you dive right in and discover the basics about the Belly Fat Diet: what it is, how it works, and why it works. After all, understanding why this diet was created and how it can impact you helps you to stay motivated and on track with your belly-flattening plan.

## **First Things First: Getting an Overview of the Belly Fat Diet**

Visceral fat is true fat in the abdomen. It causes your waistline to

expand over time, and it can have dangerous health implications. This type of fat isn't gained or lost overnight. You must transition yourself to a belly-flattening lifestyle to gradually lose visceral fat and keep it off for good. In this section, I show you the most basic ideas that the Belly Fat Diet implements to eliminate visceral fat around your midsection.

## **Treating the plan as a lifestyle, not another diet**

The Belly Fat Diet isn't really a diet. In fact, I strongly dislike the word "diet." Why? Because to me it represents something you're going to go "on" and then go "off," reverting to the old habits that caused you to gain weight in the first place. So from now on, don't think of this plan as a diet; think of it as the Belly Fat Lifestyle.

Lifestyle changes are just what they sound like — changes you make and keep for life. This little secret of the Belly Fat Diet sets it apart from most of the other diets out there. This diet isn't a short-term fix. In other words, you don't keep a one-month commitment and go back to your old habits. If you just want to drop weight quickly in a few weeks (and then regain it all plus more the next month), this plan isn't for you.

If you start out making too many changes at once or being too restrictive, you may find that the changes become almost impossible to stick with, causing you to go back to your old habits. So slow and steady always wins the race. If you start out of the gate sprinting, you'll burn out before you reach the finish line. Rather than burning out, I want you to gradually adjust your eating habits to promote health along with weight loss for life. What good does it do if you lose 20 pounds this month just to gain it back plus more next month? You're better off taking three months to lose 20 pounds if that means you can stick with the changes you have made and can keep that weight off for good.



If you follow the Belly Fat Diet the way it's designed, you aren't going to feel restricted, and you aren't going to give up all your favorite foods permanently. However, you are going to figure out how to make simple changes to your current diet that will provide you with fantastic, long-term results!

## Fighting belly fat by eating the right foods

As you transition into a belly-flattening lifestyle, you need to make a few key dietary changes. You can make these changes gradually over time. The more regularly you stick with these changes, the better your results. The following are some general guidelines to follow:

- ✓ **Consume an adequate amount of fiber per day.** Aim for a minimum of 30 grams of fiber daily. Fiber provides you with a sense of satiety without any calories. Increasing your fiber intake helps stabilize blood sugar, control cravings, and prevent overeating — all things that help promote weight loss and flatten your belly.
- ✓ **Consume an adequate amount of healthy fat each day.** Don't worry. Dietary fat doesn't equal belly fat. In fact, it's actually the opposite! Healthy fats in the diet, mainly monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids, have been shown to help promote a decrease in belly fat. But portion control is still key here. Even though these fats are healthy, they're still rich in calories. So make sure to stick within your recommended fat servings per day, which is outlined in the meal plan guidelines in Chapter 7.
- ✓ **Consume an adequate amount of lean protein.** Lean proteins — which include animal proteins like chicken breast and fish as well as plant-based proteins like tofu and beans — are what make up the majority of your muscle. Without enough dietary protein each day, you may begin to lose muscle mass as you

lose weight, which can slow your metabolism. Protein, like fats and fiber, is a nutrient that is slowly digested, helping to regulate appetite and control hunger. I recommend including a source of lean protein at each meal to help you feel satisfied and avoid cravings.

✓ **Increase your intake of whole fruits and vegetables.**

Vegetables and fruits are not only rich in filling fiber, but they're also loaded with antioxidants and phytochemicals. Certain antioxidants, such as vitamin C, have been linked with reducing belly fat by helping to regulate stress hormones in the body. They're also rich in minerals like potassium, which helps to expel excess water from the body, slimming the belly.

✓ **Drink up!** Drinking at least 8 cups of water per day helps keep you hydrated, gives you increased energy, and helps prevent water retention that can bloat your belly. Drinking adequate amounts of fluid also helps with appetite regulation, promoting weight loss.



Keep in mind that some foods can cause belly bloat. This bloat can come on overnight or even after eating just one meal full of belly-bloating foods. Bloat isn't true belly fat, but it can distend your stomach, making your waistline appear larger. Some foods have an instant belly-bloating effect due to their capability to introduce added gasses to the body, causing stomach distension. Other foods instantly bloat the belly by causing your body to hold on to fluid, giving you that puffy look and feel.



You especially want to avoid belly bloat when you're trying to look your best, such as for an upcoming event like a wedding or party.

Some instant belly-bloating foods to avoid include the following:



- ✓ **Carbonated beverages:** These gassy drinks fill your belly with air, causing your stomach to look distended and bloated. Instead, drink water or calorie-free beverages that are rich in antioxidants, such as unsweetened green tea with a squeeze of fresh lemon.
- ✓ **Gassy vegetables:** Vegetables that increase gas production, such as cabbage, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts, can cause your stomach to look and feel distended due to a buildup of gas in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. But you don't have to give up these vegetables entirely. If you slowly increase your portions of these vegetables over the course of a few weeks, versus all at once, it allows your body to adjust to them, helping to produce less gas during digestion. When eating these gassier options, also be sure to cook them thoroughly (raw vegetables can produce even more gas).
- ✓ **Gum:** Chewing gum may trigger you to swallow air, which can bloat your belly and cause it to look distended. And even though sugar-free gum may sound like a better choice, it actually contains a high amount of sugar alcohols. These alcohols are only partially digested in your body, so they can lead to gas, bloating, and GI upset — all things that cause your belly to look and feel bloated. If you do want to chew gum, try to limit yourself to only one or two pieces per day.
- ✓ **High-sugar drinks:** Drinking a large amount of simple sugars through drinks can lead to spikes in insulin levels. Because an increase in insulin promotes increased fat storage in the abdominal area, you want to avoid these high-sugar drinks. Instead, choose calorie-free beverages, such as water or unsweetened green tea.

Or try my favorite trick for a lightly flavored, belly-slimming beverage: Freeze 100 percent fruit juice in an ice cube tray. After the juice cubes are frozen, you can pop one into 12 ounces of water. The juice will slowly melt, infusing the water with all-natural flavor with none of the bloat and only a small number of calories.

- ✓ **Trans fats:** Studies have shown that the intake of trans fats can promote an increase in belly fat. So carefully screen your foods by looking for the words “partially-hydrogenated oil” in the ingredient list. If you see this term, the food you’re selecting contains a source of trans fats. It’s best to avoid foods with trans fats or partially-hydrogenated oils. Foods most likely to contain these belly-busting ingredients include baked goods and pastries, commercially fried foods, snack foods like chips and microwave popcorn, and some instant coffee drinks.

Be sure to look at the ingredient list, not just the number of grams of trans fats listed on the Nutrition Facts Panel. Foods can list 0 grams of trans fats if they contain less than half a gram per serving. Less than half a gram sounds fairly harmless, but if you eat multiple servings, you’re still taking in a significant source of trans fats. In fact, research has shown that as little as 2 grams of trans fats can be detrimental to your health, so read those ingredient lists carefully!

- ✓ **White flour:** Foods that list white flour or enriched flour as the first ingredient are mainly made up of refined carbohydrates. These carbs are digested very quickly, causing spikes in both insulin and blood sugar levels, promoting increased fat storage in the abdominal area. Choose whole-grain options instead. Make sure the first ingredient listed is a whole grain, such as oats or whole wheat.

Be cautious when reading labels. Even if a label says “enriched wheat flour” or “wheat flour,” it’s still a refined flour. You want to see the word “whole” in front of the ingredient, such as “whole-wheat flour,” to ensure you’re getting a true whole grain.

## Knowing that slip-ups are part of the process

When transitioning to a belly-flattening lifestyle, you want to keep in mind that slip-ups are unavoidable. No one is perfect with food intake every day (and those who are tend to burn themselves out

intake every day (and those who are tend to burn themselves out over time, which can lead to even more poor food choices). So if you get off track at times, just relax. You won't undo all your hard work with just one meal or in just one day. Simply investigate why this slip-up occurred (maybe you waited too long to eat and caused a poor food choice, for example), and then pick right back up where you left off.



Making lifestyle changes takes time and hard work, but if you pull yourself back together when you get a bit sidetracked, you can achieve your goals not only for a short period of time, but for life!

I want you to be successful for life (and I'm sure you do too!). That's why I help you come up with belly-friendly substitutes for many of your favorite junk foods, such as pizza, french fries, and desserts. You can't deprive yourself. Deprivation doesn't work; it just leads to cravings, hunger, and eventually binges on the wrong foods. Instead, I show you how any food can be adjusted just a little to make it a belly-friendly treat! Check out Chapter 15 for a whole chapter of recipes for satisfying snacks and desserts.

## Why the Belly Fat Diet Works

I always like to know why I'm doing something and how it works, and you may feel the same way. So in this section, I explain the main reasons that the Belly Fat Diet works and allows you to not only lose weight but also keep it off permanently!

## How it reduces insulin response

Have you tried to lose weight before but struggled with constant hunger and cravings, which made it impossible to continue your diet? If so, you have experienced cravings as a result of *insulin response*, which is the insulin/blood sugar cycle that occurs after eating and is even stronger after eating carbohydrate-laden foods.

Here's how this response works: When you eat a food, especially a food rich in carbohydrates, your body converts it into sugar (glucose) for energy. Insulin transports glucose from the bloodstream into the cells for energy. So when you eat foods that cause a spike in blood sugar, you experience a spike in insulin levels as the insulin rushes into your bloodstream to transport the excess sugar into your body's cells. After the excess sugar is out of your bloodstream, the excess insulin stays there. Your brain, sensing an increased level of insulin, realizes you need more sugar in your bloodstream to prevent your blood sugar from dropping too low. Your body makes you feel hungry and crave sugar, so you eat and get more sugar back into the bloodstream. If you give in to the cravings and consume more simple sugars, the cycle continues to repeat itself over and over. You may find yourself eating a refined carbohydrate, craving more soon after, eating again, and on and on. This cycle can lead to weight gain, and, most importantly, increased levels of dangerous visceral fat. (You can read more about insulin and its connection to belly fat in Chapter 2.)



Luckily, the Belly Fat Diet can help reduce this response. By following the diet, you discover the sources of simple carbohydrates and begin transferring away from these toward whole grains, fresh produce, lean proteins, and healthy fats. This lifestyle change helps to keep your insulin levels balanced, thereby stopping the hunger/sugar craving cycle.

## How it regulates blood sugar

When your blood sugar fluctuates rapidly, you can experience intense cravings and hunger. Think about the last time you were very hungry and craving something. What did you want to eat? Most likely it wasn't a steamed vegetable. When you allow yourself to get too hungry, cravings for something high in refined carbohydrates or something heavy, such as a fatty, fried food, sneak in. And if you're eating in a way that allows you to get too hungry on a regular basis, you'll continually experience an increase in food cravings, which can make choosing healthy, belly-friendly foods quite challenging.



The Belly Fat Diet recommends foods that keep you feeling satisfied for hours, not just minutes. These same foods trigger a very small blood sugar response, preventing a spike and fall in blood sugar and insulin levels, which can help keep cravings at bay. By following the diet, you also get in the habit of planning out healthy meals and snacks to eat frequently during the day. Doing so not only keeps blood sugar levels consistent, but it also helps give your metabolism a boost.

## How it decreases stress hormones

Stress hormones can be triggered due to emotional and physical stressors. These hormones can, in turn, cause your body to store abdominal fat. Luckily, getting specific foods and nutrients into your diet can actually help to decrease the stress hormones flowing through your body, helping to prevent that belly fat storage. And that's where the Belly Fat Diet comes in.

While following the Belly Fat Diet, you increase your intake of antioxidants, such as vitamin C and healthy fats like omega-3 fatty acids, which help to limit your body's exposure to stress hormones. You also transition to whole grains and make sure to eat at regular intervals throughout the day. All of this helps regulate the neurotransmitters in your brain.

*Neurotransmitters*, or brain chemicals, transfer signals within your nervous system. Some of these neurotransmitters impact mood, and the foods you eat can directly impact the neurotransmitters. So if you're eating the wrong foods in the wrong amounts, your mood, and in turn your stress levels, may be impacted. Limiting or overconsuming a particular food can trigger imbalances in neurotransmitters that may lead to irritability, moodiness, thinking problems, and even sleeping issues. But, by following the Belly Fat Diet, you take in the right foods (in the right amounts) to help balance your neurotransmitters, feel great, and reduce stress.

## The Principles of the Belly Fat Diet

After you understand why the Belly Fat Diet is so successful (see the earlier section "Why the Belly Fat Diet Works"), you're ready to discover the main steps you can take to shrink your waistline and become a healthier version of yourself. This section lists the lifestyle principles you must keep in mind.

# Eat more to lose more

One of the main principles of the Belly Fat Diet is that you have to eat more. That's right; you have to eat more to lose more weight! And who doesn't want to eat more? I know I do! But you can't just start eating more of all foods. In fact, that type of uncontrolled eating would be a great way to end up gaining more weight and belly fat. Instead, you want to focus on eating more of the foods that help you get rid of belly fat.

For example, vegetables are an unlimited food. And you actually need to eat more of these to promote weight loss. Foods, such as vegetables, that are rich in nutrients, high in fiber, and low in calories, fill you up without filling you out. Because these foods keep you satisfied, they help control hunger and cravings, which can lead you to make poor food choices. (See Chapter 6 for more on the foods that make up the Belly Fat Diet plan.)



With the Belly Fat Diet, you eat more food than you were likely eating before, but this time you'll see the scale start moving in the right direction. And the best part of all? You won't be hungry! In fact, you may even think that you can't eat the amount of food that I tell you to. That's what makes the Belly Fat Diet so successful: You aren't hungry. And when you don't get hungry, you tend to have fewer food cravings, allowing you to stay on track.



Don't believe me? Visualize this: Imagine that I put two snack options in front of you: three small pieces of caramel or 6 cups of air-popped popcorn. Which one looks more satisfying? Which one takes longer to eat? Which one curbs your appetite longer? Both of these snacks provide the same number of calories, but one gives you so much more food! The Belly Fat Diet works the

same way: You choose the foods that provide you with the larger, more satisfying portions but that are actually good for you and promote weight loss.



## Properly time your meals

When you commit to the Belly Fat Diet, make sure to eat on a regular basis. If you wait too long in between meals or skip a meal or snack, you can sabotage your weight loss efforts. If you wait too long to eat, you may start to get too hungry. And, of course, excessive hunger is what leads to strong food cravings — and usually for the wrong types of foods. (See the earlier section “Why the Belly Fat Diet Works” for info on why.) Getting overly hungry also leads you to eating too quickly.

The last time you were *very* hungry, did you a) cut the food you finally scrounged up into small bites, chewing each bite thoroughly and stopping when you reached the point of feeling satisfied but not stuffed, or did you b) wolf it down so fast you barely tasted it, leaving you feeling unsatisfied, which led to you looking for something else to eat, and before you knew it, you had eaten so much you felt stuffed or even sick? If you’re like most folks, you went with option b. We have all been there, myself included. Thankfully, the Belly Fat Diet can show you how to prevent this.



Excessive hunger can be avoided by eating on a regular basis. Not only do small, frequent meals and snacks control appetite, but they also help boost your metabolism (a great perk)! I recommend not waiting more than three to four hours between meals and snacks. You may be saying “that doesn’t work for my schedule,” or “I don’t have time to sit and eat that often.” Before you drop the book, let me explain. Eating every few hours doesn’t have to entail elaborately prepared meals and snacks. It also doesn’t have to involve sitting down to long meals. A simple snack, such as grabbing a handful of almonds in between breakfast and lunch or munching a few raw vegetables in the afternoon, will suffice. The key is to simply prevent hunger from sneaking up on you.

During the day, you may be busy with work, caring for children, or rushing from one activity to the next. When you're distracted and busy, you often ignore your body's subtle hunger cues. It isn't until you stop or slow down that you realize that you're starving. You want to avoid this situation where you ignore your body until your body can't be ignored anymore. When you get sucked into this routine, you end up reaching for the wrong foods, eating too much, and eating too fast.



Aim to eat within an hour of waking up and then have a light meal or snack every three to four hours. For instance, if you wake up at 6:30 a.m. daily, your schedule may look like this:

- ✓ 7 a.m. Breakfast
- ✓ 10 a.m. Snack
- ✓ 1 p.m. Lunch
- ✓ 4 p.m. Snack
- ✓ 7 p.m. Dinner
- ✓ 9 p.m. Evening snack (if needed)

The evening snack isn't always necessary. It really depends on how late you stay up. Whatever you do, try not to eat within about an hour of going to bed. You won't gain weight from eating late — that's a myth. However, eating too close to bed can affect digestion, cause heartburn, and disrupt your sleep cycle.

# Eat fat to fight fat

It takes fat to fight belly fat. Sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? But it's true. However, it's only true if it's the good fat. Both good fats and bad fats exist.

Bad fats include saturated fats and trans fats. Saturated fats are mostly found in high-fat animal products, such as butter, red meats, and full-fat dairy. Trans fats, as I mention earlier in this chapter, can be identified in foods by looking for the words “partially-hydrogenated oil” in the ingredient list.

Good fats are those that protect your heart, decrease disease risk, and even promote loss of belly fat. The two best sources of fat are

- ✓ **Monounsaturated fats:** Found in olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocado
- ✓ **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Found in fish, walnuts, and flaxseed

Multiple studies have found that a diet rich in monounsaturated fats prevents belly fat from accumulating when compared to a high-carbohydrate and high-saturated-fat diet. This may sound like a no-brainer, but the surprising part is that this prevention of belly fat occurred even when both diets delivered the same number of daily calories! Other research has found that monounsaturated fats may help you lose more belly fat even without changing your normal caloric intake or adding additional exercise. Omega-3 fatty acids have been found in several studies to help reduce the output of stress hormones. Because stress hormones promote the storage of belly fat, consuming a nutrient that helps reduce these hormones can in turn help to reduce abdominal fat storage. (Refer to the earlier section “How it decreases stress hormones” for more on how the Belly Fat Diet affects stress hormones.)



Another benefit of fat is that it's filling. Fat provides a longer period of satiety after eating than carbohydrates do. So consuming a meal that contains an adequate amount of healthy fat helps you stay full longer, helping to prevent that excessive hunger you know can lead to cravings and overeating. The Belly Fat Diet shows you how to take in around 25 percent of your daily calories from these healthy, belly-flattening fats. (See Chapter 7 to determine how many servings of fat per day are right for you on the Belly Fat Diet.)

# Go whole grain

The Belly Fat Diet focuses on transitioning away from refined carbohydrates and consuming only whole-grain starches. Doing so is an essential step in flattening your belly, because refined carbohydrates spike blood sugar and insulin, leading to more and more storage of stubborn belly fat. In fact, research has shown that people who eat a diet rich in whole grains lose more abdominal fat.

So what is a whole grain? A *whole grain* is a grain that hasn't been stripped of its outermost layer. This layer contains the highest amount of fiber and nutrients. *Refined carbohydrates*, like white bread, are grains that have been stripped of their fiber and nutrients. Refined carbohydrates are often *enriched*, meaning that vitamins and minerals have been added back into these foods. However, fiber is rarely added. As a result, these grains are rapidly digested, triggering increases in blood sugar and insulin levels.



To make sure you're selecting a whole grain, look at the ingredients on the food label of any grain product. The first ingredient should always be a whole grain. Whole grains to look for include the following:

- ✓ Bean flour
- ✓ Brown rice flour
- ✓ Oat bran
- ✓ Rye
- ✓ Whole wheat

Foods that list “enriched flour” as the first ingredient are refined and should be avoided.



Because whole grains have a higher fiber content, they help you stay satisfied for a longer period of time than refined grains would. Staying full helps you to control your appetite and portions, thereby promoting further weight loss.

# Limit your salt intake

Salt doesn't cause your body to gain fat, but it can still expand your belly. The major problem with sodium isn't its calorie content but the fact that it causes water retention.

Your body contains many electrolytes, with one of the major ones being sodium. Electrolytes help control your body's functions by carrying electrical impulses. The concentration of electrolytes must remain constant if your body is to function correctly. So when your body has a high concentration of sodium due to an increased intake from the foods you eat, the kidneys retain more water in your bloodstream to help regulate your electrolyte levels. Water in the bloodstream moves into your skin through osmosis, giving you that puffy look and feeling. If you've ever eaten a salty meal and had trouble removing your rings the next day, you've experienced this movement of water into your skin. Excessive fluid retention can also cause your stomach to look and feel bloated, making it difficult to have a flat belly.



Excessive sodium intake can do more damage than just making you look bloated. A high intake of sodium can also increase your blood pressure. And studies have shown that your arteries can actually stiffen within just 30 minutes after eating a high-sodium meal, increasing your risk of a cardiac event.



Due to the negative impact of sodium on your health as well as your belly, try to keep your daily sodium intake to 2,000 milligrams or less per day (keep it under 1,500 milligrams per day if you have high blood pressure). While staying within this amount may seem easy enough, you have to be careful. When you start examining food labels, you'll notice how much sodium

everyday foods contain! The average American consumes around 3,300 milligrams of sodium per day, which is almost double the recommended amount.

The main culprits to be aware of are table salt added to meals as well as processed foods. Think adding a sprinkle of salt to your dinner is harmless? Think again. Just 1 teaspoon of table salt contains 2,300 milligrams of sodium, which is more than your entire daily intake!

Not only do you want to nix the table salt, but you also want to carefully look at food labels and limit high-sodium foods. Whole, unprocessed foods like fresh produce are naturally low in sodium. So the more you stick to these foods and avoid adding salt at the table (or stove), the easier it is to keep your total daily sodium intake within the recommended amount. **Tip:** If you must eat canned and processed foods, try to select those that are labeled “low sodium” or “sodium free.” Become a label watcher!



Sodium is essential to maintaining many body functions. Your body needs sodium daily to exist. So don't avoid all sodium. Having too little sodium can be dangerous to your health as well. Just aim to keep it to less than 2,000 milligrams or less per day. Keep it under 1,500 milligrams per day if you have high blood pressure.

## The Health Benefits of a Flatter Belly

The results you get from following your Belly Fat Diet won't just be on the scale and in the mirror. Your insides will thank you as well! Transitioning to a belly-fat-fighting lifestyle helps improve your energy levels and overall health. Doing so truly benefits you from the inside out!





Because visceral fat increases the risk of insulin resistance, it also increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. An elevated waist circumference is also associated with increased heart disease risk. So decreasing your belly fat helps prevent both of these diseases. Losing weight, reducing your sodium intake, and increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables also helps to decrease blood pressure and cholesterol levels, providing an added layer of protection for your heart.

As you can see, losing belly fat is more than just looking better; it's about improving your health and quality of life! The following sections focus on the main two benefits you'll achieve with a smaller amount of belly fat: the reversal of metabolic syndrome and the protection of your heart.

# Reversing metabolic syndrome

*Metabolic syndrome* is the name for a group of risk factors that identify whether you're at high risk for developing heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. The more risk factors you display, the higher your disease risk. The risk factors that determine metabolic syndrome are

- ✓ Increased waistline
- ✓ Elevated blood sugar levels
- ✓ Elevated blood pressure
- ✓ Elevated blood lipids

Research has shown that an increased level of visceral fat, because it's metabolically active, can create a chain of chemical reactions in the body that increase all the characteristics of metabolic syndrome.



As you begin to make lifestyle changes following your Belly Fat Diet, your percentage of body fat, including unhealthy visceral fat, will begin to decrease. The less visceral fat you have, the less chemically active this fat becomes in your body. The loss of visceral fat helps reverse insulin resistance, decrease waist circumference, and improve blood lipids — all the things that together create metabolic syndrome.

# Maintaining a healthy heart

The lifestyle changes you make while following the Belly Fat Diet help protect your heart. The most important lifestyle change to help your heart is increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables. Because they're loaded with nutrients and fiber but low in calories, your belly-busting meal plan can help you increase your intake of these power foods each day. Consider the following benefits of increasing your intake of fresh produce:

- ✓ **You increase your intake of soluble fiber, which binds to cholesterol and transports it out of the body.** As you likely know, bad cholesterol, referred to as LDL, increases your risk of heart disease and other cardiac problems.
- ✓ **You increase your intake of many nutrients that are protective to your heart.** Because produce is rich in magnesium and potassium, for example, taking in an increased amount of these minerals helps regulate and decrease blood pressure, which allows less strain on the heart. Also, powerful antioxidants, such as lycopene and beta carotene, are rich in many plant-based foods and protect the heart by helping shield cell membranes and molecules from oxidation. Eating produce rich in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits and bell peppers, helps protect the heart by decreasing the levels of stress hormones in the body.

What are you waiting for? Go grab a veggie-packed salad!

# The Link Between Inflammation and Belly Fat

When you get a cut, you've probably noticed that as it starts to heal, the skin around it becomes red, puffy, and warm to the touch. These symptoms are referred to as *inflammation*, which is your body's

healing response to an injury, illness, or infection. The inflammation you get when you cut yourself or get another type of wound is known as *acute inflammation*. It's localized to one spot and helps the wound heal. *Chronic inflammation* is another condition, which causes your body to become inflamed internally due to stresses from internal or external factors.

In the following sections, I discuss chronic inflammation in more depth, showing you what it is, what causes it, what can prevent it, and how it affects your belly.

## What is inflammation?

Inflammation is a complex response of the systems in your body to fight off harmful pathogens, irritants, or even damaged cells. It's your body's way of protecting itself by removing damaging substances and initiating the healing process. It's really part of the immune response.



Think of inflammation as a war in your body. A foreign body, pathogen, or mutated cell enters the body and threatens it by risking damage or disease. To prevent damage, the body unleashes white blood cells to attack the invader. These cells either destroy the invader or wall it off to prevent it from spreading to other areas of the body. The body also releases proteins containing fluids to the area under invasion. The dilation and constriction of blood vessels to move protein and fluid to the area are what contribute to swelling. As nerve endings are compressed from swelling, pain can result.

When inflammation occurs in your body on a regular basis, such as from constant introduction of unhealthy food substances, your body can become chronically inflamed. Chronic inflammation is an autoimmune disease. Your body's defense system switches from protecting you and starts to attack itself and slowly leads to a metabolic breakdown, which can lead to serious, long-term health

consequences.

Some individuals with chronic inflammation display symptoms like joint pain and chronic fatigue. Even *gingivitis*, inflammation of the gums, may be an indication of inflammation or impending inflammation in other parts of your body. However, inflammation can also be a silent disease, with few to no symptoms until it causes other serious health conditions.



Poor dietary habits and lifestyle choices, such as cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol intake, and sedentary lifestyle, can increase the risk of chronic inflammation. So if your diet isn't the greatest and you make some of these poor lifestyle choices, you may have underlying inflammation. To be safe, everyone should assume she has a low level of inflammation in her body and should work at preventing it.

# The causes of inflammation

Can you guess what one of the biggest contributors to inflammation is? If you said “belly fat,” you’re right! Fat tissues in your body secrete hormones that help regulate your immune system (which inflammation is a part of). The more fatty tissue you have, the more hormones your body secretes. And when these hormones become out of balance, inflammation can result.



Poor dietary choices can lead to chronic inflammation. Many nutrients and added ingredients, when consumed in excess, can contribute to inflammation in the intestines, which therefore can increase inflammation throughout the body.

Here are some of the biggest inflammation triggers:

- ✓ **Excessive intake of sugar and refined carbohydrates:** Simple sugars, such as added sugar or white flour, can trigger an increase in insulin response, which, over time, can increase inflammation. (You can read more about the insulin response in the earlier section “How it reduces insulin response.”) Instead, aim to reduce your intake of sugar by avoiding sugar-sweetened beverages, limiting sugar-packed desserts, and choosing whole-grain starches over their white counterparts.
- ✓ **Trans fats:** These fats are doubly bad in the body because they not only raise unhealthy LDL cholesterol levels, but they also lower healthy HDL cholesterol levels. Research has found that individuals with a high dietary intake of trans fats have more visceral fat. These fats also further increase inflammation in the body.
- ✓ **Vegetable oils:** These oils, such as corn oil, are rich in omega-6 fatty acids and low in omega-3 fatty acids. A diet with a ratio of fats high in omega-6s and low in omega-3s has been linked to increased inflammation. Why? Because a diet rich in

carbohydrates, especially refined carbohydrates, has been shown to, when combined with omega-6 fatty acids, increase production of pro-inflammatory hormones called *eicosanoids*. Instead, use oils rich in omega-3 fatty acids or monounsaturated fats, which include flaxseed oil (great source of omega-3s) and olive oil (monounsaturated fat).

- ✓ **Sodium:** Excessive dietary sodium can stiffen arteries, helping to promote inflammation and increase the risk of a cardiovascular event. Avoid adding table salt to foods, and select whole, unprocessed foods as much as possible to help reduce your sodium intake. (You can read more about sodium in the earlier section “Limit your salt intake.”)
- ✓ **Excessive alcohol:** In moderate amounts (one glass of alcohol per day for women and two glasses per day for men), alcohol can be beneficial and may have mild anti-inflammatory properties. However, increased intake of alcohol has been shown to elevate inflammation markers in the body, which is a sign of chronic inflammation. Excessive alcohol can also increase the storage of visceral fat, further increasing inflammation risk.
- ✓ **Food sensitivities unique to you:** Do certain foods make you feel sick after you’ve eaten them? Do you tend to get stomach pains or indigestion after eating them? Have you noticed a change in bowel habits or even a skin rash or hives after eating some foods? If so, you may have a food allergy or intolerance. Consuming a food that your body can’t tolerate can cause inflammation because your body views this food as an intruder.



If you notice symptoms of a potential food allergy, see a food allergy specialist to be tested. If you do have multiple food allergies or intolerances, you need to meet with a Registered Dietitian to assess your food intake and ensure you’re meeting your body’s nutrient needs while eliminating

these allergens from your diet.



Food intolerances aren't always easy to diagnose. The best thing to do is to keep a detailed food record of what you eat and how you feel after eating it. Then eliminate the potential food irritant from your diet for two weeks. Add it back in a small amount one day, and then monitor your response. If you notice any symptoms return, eliminate this food from your diet for good. Follow this procedure for any possible food irritant to help you decrease inflammation.



# Foods that fight inflammation

When eaten on a regular basis, foods with anti-inflammatory properties can help reduce inflammation in the body, helping to prevent the long-term health consequences associated with it — but only if you also eliminate the foods that cause inflammation (see the preceding section). When inflammation is under control, not only will you have more energy and feel better overall, but you'll also find that weight loss and reduction of belly fat both become easier!

The following foods and nutrients can fight inflammation:

- ✓ **Fruits and vegetables:** All fruits and vegetables, due to their rich nutrient and fiber content, help to combat chronic inflammation, so make sure to include adequate amounts of these foods daily (see Chapter 7 for the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables). Some types of fresh produce, however, are even more potent than others. Some terrific anti-inflammatory fruits and vegetables to include in your meal plan include the following:
  - **Apples:** These crunchy fruits contain a high level of *quercetin*, a flavonoid with powerful anti-inflammatory properties.
  - **Berries:** These sweet fruits are jam-packed with inflammation-busting antioxidants. They also have been found to protect against diseases like cancer and dementia.
  - **Broccoli:** This powerful veggie is rich in many phytonutrients, including *sulforaphane*, which helps eliminate potentially carcinogenic compounds in your body, helping decrease inflammation and boost your immune system.
  - **Mushrooms:** Rich in immune-boosting compounds, these tasty vegetables are a great way to combat inflammation and disease.

- **Papaya:** This delicious fruit is rich in vitamin C and vitamin E as well as an enzyme called *papain*. Together these help to decrease inflammation and improve digestion.
  - **Pineapple:** Rich in the enzyme *bromelain*, this sweet, tart fruit aids in healing and decreases swelling. Bromelain is so powerful, in fact, that research has found extracts of the enzyme to be almost as effective in treating arthritis inflammation as some nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)!
  - **Spinach:** This vegetable is loaded with flavonoids and carotenoids that help decrease inflammation and oxidative damage in your body's cells.
- ✓ **Green tea:** This mild beverage is great for helping shrink your waistline as well as for decreasing inflammation. The flavonoids in this tea have natural anti-inflammatory properties. And the compound EGCG in green tea has been shown to help reduce body fat.
  - ✓ **Monounsaturated fats:** These heart-healthy fats help raise your healthy HDL cholesterol levels and reduce overall inflammation. Great sources include olive oil, almonds, and avocado.
  - ✓ **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Research has shown that a diet with a high percentage of omega-3 fatty acids and a low percentage of omega-6 fatty acids has been linked with decreased inflammation. Food sources of omega-3s include walnuts, flaxseed, and fish, such as wild Alaskan salmon.
  - ✓ **Spices:** Certain spices, including garlic, turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, and chili peppers, have potent inflammation-reducing capabilities, so try adding them to meals as often as possible.
  - ✓ **Water:** Staying hydrated is essential to flushing inflammation-causing toxins out of your body. Aim for 64 ounces of water per day. **Remember:** Add an additional 8 ounces of water for every 30 minutes of exercise as well.

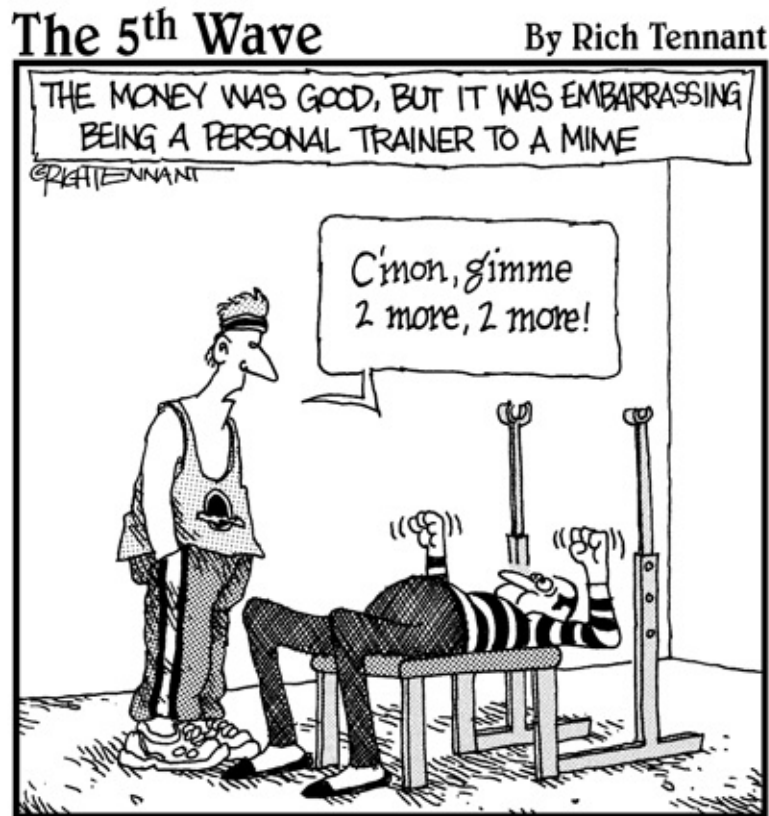
✓ **Whole grains:** Rich in fiber, whole grains help control the insulin response in your body. The high B vitamin content of whole grains also helps reduce the inflammatory hormone *homocystine* in the body.



Try adding these anti-inflammatory foods into your meal plan on a daily basis. The more often you eat these foods, the less inflammation that will be present in your body.

## Part II

# Working Your Way to a Flatter Belly



### In this part . . .

You may have heard it said before: “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Planning is key to losing weight and keeping it off permanently.

In this part, I show you how to prepare for success on the Belly Fat Diet plan. I outline the plan’s key components and introduce the individualized Belly Fat Diet plans. I help you determine which plan is most appropriate for you so you can start shedding belly fat

quickly and easily. You also get specific meal-plan guidelines as well as sample meal plans to get you started.

This part also focuses on exercise, providing belly-blasting workout routines that tone and tighten your tummy to give you results you never dreamed possible! I also share simple strategies to help you get moving and stay moving, even if you've never exercised a day in your life.

## Chapter 5

# Preparing Yourself for the Belly Fat Diet

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the philosophy of the Belly Fat Diet
  - ▶ Recognizing the role stress can play in losing belly fat
  - ▶ Adding belly-slimming foods and nutrients to your diet
- 

Your Belly Fat Diet plan isn't just another fad diet to go on and off. Many folks have been on fad diets that have failed them. Diet failure often happens because people think that diets require only temporary habit changes. The Belly Fat Diet plan is different. This plan isn't a quick fix that allows you to lose weight only to gain it right back (plus some!) in a short period of time. This plan is a lifestyle. By following this plan, you discover how to incorporate all your favorite foods while improving not only your waistline but also your health.

Throughout this chapter, I arm you with the tools you need to get started with your Belly Fat Diet lifestyle. I show you step-by-step how to begin so you can transition smoothly and easily away from unhealthy, bellyfat storing habits to habits that blast belly fat and improve your energy levels and overall well-being. I also point out some of the biggest contributors to belly fat — and they aren't always food! I show you how to recognize these problem areas and some simple strategies to manage them so you stay looking and feeling fantastic!



For additional information on recruiting the support of your family and friends as you embark on the Belly Fat Diet lifestyle,

check out [www.dummies.com/go/bellyfat](http://www.dummies.com/go/bellyfat).

# Understanding the Belly Fat Diet Lifestyle

As I mention earlier, the Belly Fat Diet isn't your typical temporary diet — it's a lifestyle. If the changes you make while following your Belly Fat Diet plan become a lifestyle, those changes become ingrained within you. You won't begin a pattern of yo-yo dieting, where you lose weight only to regain it rapidly. Instead, when you focus on making small, gradual changes that you can stick with, these changes become part of your typical routine — or lifestyle — and you won't be tempted to revert to your old behaviors. Your new habits become your new way of life, and they will likely stick around for good.

In the following sections, I help you understand what you're getting into by giving you an overview of the steps involved in the Belly Fat Diet plan.

## Deciding on a plan that fits your personality

Everyone has a different mindset and personality when it comes to weight loss. Some people have the “all or nothing” mindset and want to change everything overnight. Others feel overwhelmed by this approach and need to make only a few changes at once. This flexibility is the magic of the Belly Fat Diet plan. You can follow it in three different ways:

- ✓ **The Turbo-Charged plan:** If you're someone who wants to dive right in, make many changes at once, and see fast results, the Turbo-Charged plan may be the best fit for you.
- ✓ **The Moderation plan:** If you need to lose a significant amount of weight, but need to make small changes over time to prevent burnout, the Moderation plan is your best bet.

- ✓ **The Gradual-Change plan:** If you only have a small amount of belly fat to lose and prefer to make changes over the course of a few weeks rather than days, the Gradual-Change plan is for you.

Regardless of what plan type best fits your needs, the specific meal plans along with the lifestyle changes I discuss throughout this chapter can help you to shed weight and unpleasant belly fat and provide the tools you need to successfully maintain your results for years to come. I discuss each of these three plans in more detail in Chapter 7.



Losing weight is the easy part. Maintaining your results over a long period of time is often the most challenging aspect. And this maintenance is what most diet plans leave out. They show you how to drop weight fast, but they leave you hanging on how to prevent gaining the weight back.

Don't worry. I won't do that to you. I provide you with many tools and tips to help you become a huge success at weight maintenance for the rest of your life (after you first achieve your weight loss goals, of course!). In fact, I devote Chapter 18 to understanding weight maintenance, including meal plans.

## Committing yourself to change

Because you're reading this book, you're obviously already motivated to lose weight, shrink your belly, and take control of your health. And that's great! Now you just have to commit yourself to making the required lifestyle changes. Doing so is easier said than done, but don't stress out — it's bad for your belly! (Check out the later section "Managing Stress for a Flatter Belly" for details.) In the following sections, I show you some of the easiest ways to start committing yourself to making the changes necessary to start fighting belly fat and keeping it off for good!



## Write down your reasons to lose weight

I have a trick I like to recommend to my clients who struggle with motivation or temptation. Take out a piece of paper, grab a pen, and ask yourself why you want to lose weight. And don't just say to look better. Of course that's part of it, but really think about this question. What are *all* the reasons you want to lose weight? Is it to have more energy? To lower your blood pressure? To prevent heart disease or diabetes? To fit into an outfit you love? To help you keep up with your kids or grandkids? Or maybe to look and feel younger? Whatever your reasons, no matter how small or how ridiculous they may seem, write them all down!

After you have compiled your reasons for change, put this piece of paper somewhere you'll almost always have it with you. You can store it in your wallet or purse, or you can even text it to your cellphone if that's easier for you. Whatever you do, just make sure you have these reasons on hand at all times so you can take a look at them when you're struggling to stick with your lifestyle choices.

Think about the last time you tried to lose weight and were in a tempting situation. Maybe you went to a party and all of your favorite foods were out on display. What happened? Did you dive right in and then later regret it? Don't feel bad if you did. This reaction is normal. It happens to everyone at times, including me. Now think about being in the same situation with that list of every single reason you could think of for wanting to lose weight in front of you. Do you think you would have still overindulged? Or do you think you would have had just a few of the less healthy foods and looked for some better options as well?



Chances are, when you take the time to reflect on the reasons you're motivated to lose weight, you will almost always make the better choice. Looking at this list may not work 100 percent of the time, but even if it helps you prevent temptation 80 percent of the time, you're still better off.

## **Visualize success**

In addition to keeping your reasons for change foremost in your mind, I want you to work on visualization as well. This amazing tool can help you stay motivated and resist temptations that come along.

Here's what to do: Think about how you want to look and feel at your goal weight. Picture yourself in an outfit you would love to be able to wear. Imagine yourself full of energy and vigor. Close your eyes and picture this image in as much detail as you can. Use as many senses as you can when creating this image. How do your new clothes feel on your skin? Is it a great feeling to put on pants that don't feel snug around the waistline? Can you run up the stairs without feeling winded? Are your skin and hair glowing due to your healthy diet? Are your muscles more defined from your new exercise routine? After you have a vivid image in your mind, open your eyes.

At least once a day, spend a few minutes calling on this image in your mind. When you're faced with a tempting situation or a stressful situation that may throw you off track, close your eyes for just a few seconds and remember this image. Remember that this image is your goal and is everything you're working so hard to attain. By constantly reminding yourself of what you're working toward and truly seeing the end result of all your efforts, you're more apt to stay motivated and on track.

## **Take stock of your habits**

Some of your behaviors and habits can be damaging to your belly, so I want you to identify the biggest areas of your current diet and daily routine that need some work. No matter how healthfully you currently eat, you can always improve something.

The biggest contributors to belly fat are consuming refined carbohydrates, unhealthy saturated and trans fats, simple sugars, and excessive sodium. In addition, lifestyle factors like inadequate sleep, excessive stress, and limited physical activity can also pack

on the pounds and expand your waistline.



It's vital to your Belly Fat Diet success to realize what current lifestyle behaviors are contributing to your belly fat and weight gain. If you don't know what's causing it, how are you going to fix it? So, for one full day, record your food intake as well as your other lifestyle behaviors. Here's what to write down:

- ✓ Everything you eat and drink, including any salt you may add to your food
- ✓ How long you slept, noting whether it was interrupted sleep and whether you felt rested when you awoke
- ✓ Your daily stress level, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest amount of stress
- ✓ Your level of physical activity and whether you performed any structured exercise, including how much and how often

After compiling it, examine the record that you kept. Are you consuming a large amount of fruits and vegetables? Out of the grains you're eating, are they mostly whole grain or are many refined? What type of fats are you consuming? Are they the healthy plant-based fats or the unhealthy saturated and trans fats? Are you inactive? Is your stress level high? After you start realizing your bad habits, you can begin trying to change them.

## Transitioning to whole foods

Whole grains are bread products and starches that contain all parts of the grain: the bran, endosperm, and germ. These parts of the grain contain fiber and protein, which help to slow down digestion. Refined carbohydrates, on the other hand, have had the bran and germ removed, leaving only the endosperm. Because refined carbohydrates contain less fiber and protein, they're digested much more rapidly. This rapid digestion triggers a rise in blood sugar and insulin levels, which can cause you to begin storing more belly fat.



Transitioning away from refined carbohydrate sources and eating mainly whole grains is essential if you want to flatten your stomach once and for all. The increased insulin response caused by refined carbohydrates and simple sugars increases fat storage in your abdomen and makes your body more resistant to burning this fat. (You can read about the impact insulin has on belly fat in detail in Chapter 2.) To get your body on board with your plans to shed belly fat, you have to decrease this insulin response by consuming whole grains.

As you begin the Belly Fat Diet, start by going through your cabinets and pantry and look at the breads and grains you typically eat. For any refined grain you have, think of a healthier, belly-friendly option you can replace it with. For instance, if you have crackers made with white flour, switch them with 100 percent stone-ground wheat or brown rice crackers. If you have a loaf of white bread, replace it with 100 percent whole-wheat or oat bread. Check out Chapter 6 for more information on identifying whether a product is a whole grain or a refined grain.

Whole grains not only contain more fiber and nutrition, but they actually contain a lot more flavor as well. So these switches won't only be great for your waistline, but also for your taste buds!

## Getting adequate sleep

The last thing you may think about when trying to lose weight is sleep, but it's actually a huge piece of the weight loss puzzle! Many studies have linked the amount and quality of sleep with appetite regulation and metabolism. Ghrelin and leptin are two hormones that regulate appetite in your body. *Ghrelin* is produced in the intestinal tract and helps stimulate appetite. *Leptin*, which is produced in your fat cells, tells your brain when you've eaten enough and are satisfied.



Lack of sleep leads to a decrease in leptin production, leaving you feeling less satisfied after eating. Even worse, too little sleep can trigger a rise in ghrelin, making you want to eat more. This combination is a recipe for weight gain. In fact, this sleep connection is so powerful, one study out of Stanford found a direct correlation with body weight and sleep. This study showed that those who slept the least weighed the most.

Being tired from lack of sleep can also cause you to seek out high-carbohydrate, high-sugar foods and snacks. Why? Perhaps because your body is looking for a quick burst of energy. Unfortunately, however, these simple sugars digest rapidly, giving you a quick burst of energy followed by a rapid decline in energy. If you continue to eat simple sugars over and over for energy, not only will your blood sugar become erratic, but so will your insulin levels, making it easier to store belly fat.



Sleep alone isn't the miracle cure to weight loss, but a lack of sleep can make it much harder to stay on track with a healthy eating plan. Increased hunger and cravings from fatigue can also increase the temptation to eat the foods that sabotage your belly-fighting efforts. So if you sleep six hours or less per night, work on increasing your amount of shut-eye. The ideal is to sleep seven to eight hours per night, but any amount more than what you're currently getting may be helpful, so work on increasing your sleep over time.

## Managing Stress for a Flatter Belly

If you want to fight belly fat, you also have to fight stress. When you're constantly under stress, your body reacts. And, unfortunately, one of the ways in which your body reacts is to store fat right where you want it the least: in your belly!

Although you may not always notice it, your day can be filled with stressors. Think of the jerk who cut you off on the way to work or the person in front of you in the checkout line at the grocery store who had to count out hundreds of pennies to pay. Even if you don't think you're stressed, when you're in a hurry, these little annoyances can become stressful to your body. When your body is under stress, it releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. And these hormones, when released into your body on a regular basis, can begin to increase fat storage in your midsection. (In Chapter 2, you can read about how these stress hormones can trigger belly fat storage.)

The stress response is your body's way of protecting you and helping you rise to address and fight off challenges. A certain level of stress can be healthy. However, at a certain point, stress levels can become too great and begin to impact your health, mood, and belly.

In the following sections, I show you how to determine the stressors in your life, explain how to know when your stress level is too high, and provide a few simple ways to start decreasing stress in your daily life. All these actions should help to reduce your belly fat (and make your life more enjoyable).

## Identifying common stressors

Think about your day-to-day routine. What part of it brings on the most stress for you? Is it sitting in traffic? Is it running late to a meeting or having to drive the kids to multiple activities? Think about some of the stressful situations you run into on a regular basis. How do you react to these situations? Understanding the stress in your life and how you handle it is important to staying calm (and losing that gut!).

People handle stress in one of three main ways:

- ✓ **They become agitated.** These folks get angry and keyed up when stressed. They may yell, shout, or be unable to sit still.

- ✓ **They become quiet or withdrawn.** These people tend to shut down with stress. They may space out or just withdraw from the situation. A stressful situation may make them feel more depressed than agitated.
- ✓ **They freeze.** These individuals, on the surface, seem to freeze during a stressful situation. However, on the inside, they feel extremely agitated. They tend to hold everything in instead of expressing emotion.



There isn't necessarily a right way to react to stress, but you need to know how you respond to stress so you can recognize when you're under it. Recognizing when you're under stress is important so you can see how often you're stressed, what brings about this level of stress, and how you can manage it to decrease your overall stress levels.

Both external and internal causes can bring about stress. The most common external factors of stress include

- ✓ Family and children
- ✓ Financial stress
- ✓ Job-related stressors
- ✓ Major life changes
- ✓ Relationship difficulties

Internal causes of stress include

- ✓ Being too much of a perfectionist
- ✓ Engaging in negative self-talk
- ✓ Not being assertive enough
- ✓ Having a pessimistic attitude

- ✓ Setting unrealistic expectations for yourself

Make an effort to determine which of these factors brings on the majority of stress in your life and begin to work on reducing that stress load. The later section “Bringing your stress level down” can show you how.

## Recognizing when stress is too high

Some stress can actually be good for you. It may help you to perform under pressure or give you added motivation to meet a deadline. But at a certain point, stress crosses from being healthy to being detrimental. Everyone has a different stress threshold, and your tolerance to stress depends on many things. You may be able to handle a larger amount of stress

- ✓ If you have a strong support system around you
- ✓ If you have a positive outlook on life
- ✓ If you know a stressful situation will present itself and you’ve prepared for it
- ✓ If you know how to calm yourself and self-soothe



You need to be on the lookout for stress overload, or the point at which stress can become both mentally and physically damaging. Figure 5-1 shows some common symptoms caused by stress overload. The more symptoms you display from the figure, the closer you may be to experiencing stress overload.

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**Figure 5-1:**  
Identifying  
symptoms of  
stress  
overload.



Mental and Emotional Symptoms	Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Changes
Decreased concentration	Muscle aches and pains	Eating too much or too little
Forgetfulness	Rapid heartbeat	Insomnia
Negative thinking	Gastrointestinal changes, such as constipation or diarrhea	Sleeping too much
Constant racing thoughts and worry		Isolating self from others
Moodiness		Using substances such as alcohol or cigarettes to relax
Agitation		
Feeling overwhelmed		

## Bringing your stress level down

Learning strategies to reduce and manage stress is important for preventing the health effects that I discuss in the preceding section. Managing your stress is all about taking charge. If you start to take control of your emotions as well as your environment, schedules, and any other factors that may bring on stress, you can start to manage stress in a healthy way.



Be proactive. If you can change a stressful situation before it happens or while it's happening, do it. (However, if you can't change it, make sure to focus on yourself and those things you can control.) Also, make time every day to relax, rest, and unwind from the stressors of the day. Even if the stress in your life seems out of control, you can control the way you respond to it, which can make all the difference. With practice, you'll be able to better identify stressors in your life, be able to better handle them, and be able to better control the situation causing them. Doing so gives you more confidence that you can face these stressors and challenges, which in itself can help to

reduce the overall stress you feel inside. As your levels of stress and anxiety decrease, the stress hormones your body releases also start to decline, helping you to shed excess weight around the middle.

In the following sections, I show you three techniques you can use to reduce stress and relax your body.

## **Breathing deeply**

One of the easiest and best ways to reduce stress in the body is through deep breathing. It's simple to do and is a great way to cut stress almost immediately. The way you breathe affects your entire body, so when you breathe in deeply and slowly, it sends a message to your brain to relax and calm down. This message automatically helps to decrease your stress and put you in a more relaxed state.

To help reduce stress no matter what the situation and no matter where you are, start practicing *belly breathing*. You can master this simple technique quickly with just a little practice. To practice belly breathing, refer to Figure 5-2 and follow these steps:

### **1. Sit or lay in a comfortable position.**

You can sit in a comfy chair, on the floor, or even lay down on a couch, bed, or fitness mat. Remember that this exercise can be done anywhere, so even if you're sitting at your desk at work, in the car, on the train, or even a park bench, you can still practice this exercise.

### **2. Place one hand on your chest and the other just below your ribs on your belly and take a deep breath through your nose.**

Breathe in deep enough that it forces your belly to push your hand out. Your chest shouldn't be moving as you do this.

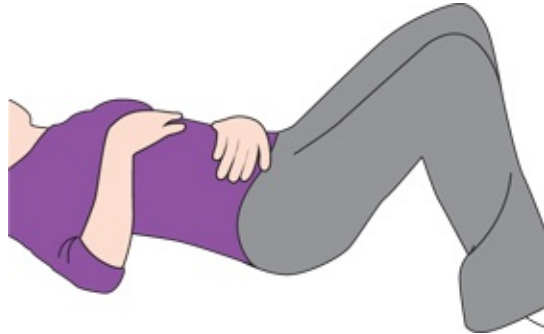
### **3. Exhale through pursed lips (like when you're trying to whistle).**

As you breathe out, focus on feeling the hand on your belly go in with your stomach.

### **4. Repeat Steps 1 through 3 five to ten times, breathing in slowly**

**and deeply.**

**Figure 5-2:**  
Deep  
breathing.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*

## **Progressive muscle relaxation**

*Progressive muscle relaxation*, a stress-relieving technique, sounds complicated, but it's actually very simple. It involves focusing on each muscle group and slowly tensing and relaxing each muscle to help you calm and decompress. This technique forces you to focus on the difference between the tense muscle and the relaxed muscle, helping you become more aware of physical sensations and thus able to relax and release tension.

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Tense the muscles in your toes, hold the tension for 5 to 10 seconds, and then relax the muscles for 30 seconds.**
- 2. Move on to your legs, following the tension and relaxation directions in Step 1 for your calves, quadriceps, and even glutes. Slowly work your way up your body.**

Practice tensing and relaxing your muscles all the way to your shoulders, neck, and even your face until you reach the top of your head.

Figure 5-3 illustrates another way of doing progressive muscle relaxation: in reverse order.

**Figure 5-3:**  
Progressive  
muscle  
relaxation.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*

## Exercising

One of the best ways to reduce stress (and, of course, shrink your belly!) is through exercise. Here's why exercise is so important:

- ✓ **It improves the flow of blood to your brain.** This increased blood flow brings oxygen and energy (in the form of sugar) to your brain.
- ✓ **It fosters clear thinking.** When you're concentrating intensely, the neurons in your brain start working even harder than normal. These neurons then produce increased amounts of waste products, which, if built up, can cause you to suffer from foggy thinking. By exercising, however, you speed the flow of blood through your brain, moving these waste products faster and allowing your brain to function at its peak.
- ✓ **It releases endorphins into your bloodstream.** This release gives you a feeling of happiness, positively affects your overall sense of well-being, and helps reduce overall stress.

So what's the best exercise for stress reduction? A study out of the University of Missouri-Columbia found that high-intensity exercise was the best way to reduce overall stress and anxiety levels. This includes exercises like interval training. Here's the good news: The belly-blasting workout routines in Chapter 10 include this type of

belly-blasting workout routines in Chapter 10 include this type of training, so they're perfect for your belly and your stress level!

## Reducing stress with food

You may find this surprising, but your diet can actually impact your stress levels. The food you eat, how you eat it, and when you eat it can positively or negatively affect your overall stress levels. And as you know, if your stress level increases, so can your waistline. So in the same way that it's important to practice breathing exercises and get regular physical activity to manage stress, it's also just as important to focus on eating the right foods (at the right times) to help manage stress.

Specific nutrients can impact stress levels, but so can the timing of your meals and snacks. When you go long periods of time without eating, your blood sugar can drop. When your blood sugar drops, your energy level can decrease, your mental focus can decline, and you can become irritable. These feelings can all bring on and increase stress throughout the day. For this reason, along with the benefit to metabolism and weight loss, it's important to eat small meals and snacks frequently throughout the day.

Consuming adequate carbohydrates during the day is also helpful for managing stress (and therefore slimming your belly). When you eat carbohydrates, your body releases the hormone *serotonin*, which is a “feel good” chemical in the brain. Serotonin not only helps you feel good, but it also helps to reduce stress.



However, you can't just choose any carbohydrate. You need to consume only whole-grain carbohydrates. The fiber in these carbohydrates helps control appetite, decrease insulin response, and prevent midday dips in your energy level. You can read about whole grains and how to identify them in Chapter 6.

The following sections show you the specific nutrients and types of

The following sections show you the specific nutrients and types of foods that can help decrease stress and belly fat.

## Reach for vitamin C if you're stressed

The next time you're stressed, you may want to grab an orange. Why? A German study found a direct connection between vitamin C and stress hormones. This study showed that a diet rich in vitamin C can help reduce stress levels and return blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol to normal levels after a stressful situation. So after a stressful situation, stress hormones will circulate in your body for shorter amounts of time, helping to fight against belly fat storage.

Don't worry if you don't love oranges. You can choose from plenty of great sources of vitamin C. Some of the best include

- ✓ Bell peppers
- ✓ Broccoli
- ✓ Grapefruit
- ✓ Kale
- ✓ Kiwi
- ✓ Oranges
- ✓ Papaya
- ✓ Strawberries



Although high in vitamin C, fruit juice contains limited amounts of fiber and large amounts of natural sugar, which can increase insulin response and increase belly fat storage. If you do reach for juice, choose only 100 percent fruit juice and limit the amount to 4 ounces per day.

## Adding Belly Slimming Foods to

# Adding Belly-Shrinking Foods to Your Diet

Believe it or not, you can reduce belly fat by eating! The catch is that you have to eat the right foods. The following sections cover the fats, beverages, and low-glycemic foods that need to be a part of your diet.

## The best fats for your belly

Heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and monounsaturated fats have been found in research to help shrink belly fat. They also can help cut stress levels and reduce stress hormones, further reducing belly fat. I explain each of these good fats in the following sections.

### Omega-3 fatty acids

*Omega-3 fatty acids* are a powerful fat with many anti-inflammatory properties. They not only promote health, but they also have been shown to impact belly fat in a positive way. In addition, studies have shown that eating a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids can actually keep the stress hormones (cortisol and adrenaline) from peaking.

Imagine, for example, that you're faced with a stressful situation. Your boss comes to you at 2 p.m. with a major project that needs to be completed and turned in before the end of the day. Realizing that this task is next to impossible, you start feeling stressed. The more stressed you feel, the more your body releases stress hormones. These same hormones love filling up the fat cells in your belly. However, if your diet is rich in omega-3s, these stress hormones will be released, but they won't peak as high as they would otherwise. As a result, you have fewer stress hormones circulating in your body and, therefore, fewer stress hormones to store belly fat.

### Monounsaturated fats

*Monounsaturated fats* are the fats found in many plant-based foods,

such as olive oil, peanuts, and avocado. Although you may hear the word “fat” and think it’s something damaging to your weight loss efforts, nothing is further from the truth. Actually, monounsaturated fats are powerful belly fat fighters.

A Spanish study published in *Diabetes Care*, an American Diabetes Association journal, found a very real connection between monounsaturated fats and a reduction in belly fat. The study looked at individuals with excessive belly fat and placed them on three different types of calorie-reduced diets: a diet high in saturated fat, a diet rich in monounsaturated fats, and a diet rich in carbohydrates. Only the individuals in the group consuming a diet rich in monounsaturated fats were found to have a reduction in belly fat accumulation. And the best part was they were found to lose both subcutaneous and visceral belly fat!

## Drinking your way to a flatter belly

Did you know that what you drink can significantly impact your belly? For instance, you probably know that sugary drinks like soda and lemonade can spike insulin and cause your body to store belly fat. However, did you know that drinks with excessive amounts of caffeine can increase belly fat as well? And did you know that other drinks can actually help burn belly fat?

Caffeine can provide your body with a slight metabolism boost. So you may think you should consume lots of it to burn more calories and more fat. This thinking is true to a point, but it doesn’t tell the whole story.



A general rule is to keep your caffeine intake to no more than 300 milligrams per day. That’s equal to about 2 to 3 cups of coffee. Beyond this amount is where caffeine may have more of a negative impact than a positive one. Very high levels of caffeine in the body can start to impact you in a few unhealthy



ways. You can start to feel more agitated, have trouble concentrating, and even suffer from a disrupted sleep cycle. These symptoms can all raise stress hormone production and slow metabolism.

If you need to cut back on your caffeine intake to stay within the suggested limits, try swapping your typical morning cup of coffee or your afternoon soda for decaffeinated green tea. This tea is loaded with stress-fighting antioxidants, which can help prevent cell damage and oxidation. Because green tea is one of the least processed teas, it also contains a high level of a catechin called *epigallocatechin-3-gallate* (EGCG). Promising studies have indicated that EGCG may help to reduce overall body fat, but especially belly fat. So drink up!

## Eating foods with a low glycemic index

Throughout this book, I stress that you need to consume more whole grains and fewer refined carbohydrates. I suggest this change because refined carbohydrates have a high glycemic index (GI). The *glycemic index* is a scale that ranks foods based on how fast and how high they can raise your blood sugar. The lower a food ranks on the GI scale, the less of a rise in blood sugar it creates. A food ranking high on the GI scale causes a rapid spike in blood sugar.



When your blood sugar rises quickly, you experience an increased release of insulin into the bloodstream. And because insulin can store more abdominal fat, this news is bad for your belly. So choosing carbohydrates that rank lower on the GI scale helps to limit the blood sugar and insulin response, therefore giving you an added boost in the fight against belly fat.

In the following sections, I explain the glycemic index further and suggest low-GI foods to stock up on.

## How the GI of a food is calculated

Carbohydrates are found in vegetables, fruits, starches, and dairy products like milk and yogurt. Any food that contains a source of carbohydrate can have a GI associated with it. In general, refined carbohydrates (processed starches, such as white bread, and foods high in added sugar, such as candy) tend to have a higher GI.

The most recent way devised to determine a food's GI has been to use white bread as a standard for comparison. White bread was given a GI value of 100. The GI of other foods is then calculated based on how quickly blood sugar rises after consumption of the food in comparison to the white bread standard. Foods with a GI greater than 100 raise blood sugar faster and higher than white bread, whereas foods with a GI less than 100 raise blood sugar slower and lower than this bread.



A GI value greater than 70 is considered to be a relatively high GI and may elevate insulin levels, working against your efforts to lose belly fat. But I want you to think of GI as a tool and not a rule. Even though consuming high-GI foods may make it more difficult to achieve your flat belly, you have to remember that GI is affected by more than just food itself. It can be elevated or lowered by what that food is eaten with and how much of the food is consumed. So if you do choose to have a high-GI food, try eating it at a meal that also contains lean protein, healthy fats, and high-fiber, low-GI foods. Doing so can minimize the high-GI food's impact on blood sugar and insulin.

## Looking for low-GI foods

Table 5-1 lists the GI index categories of many common foods. The categories are as follows:

- ✓ GI ranking of 55 or less = Low-GI food
- ✓ GI ranking of 56–69 = Medium-GI food

✓ GI ranking of 70 or more = High-GI food

Proteins and fats aren't listed in the table, because these are all low-GI foods (unless additional ingredients like breading have been added).

<b>Table 5-1      The GI Index Category of Various Foods</b>			
<i><b>Food</b></i>	<i><b>GI Index Category</b></i>	<i><b>Food</b></i>	<i><b>GI Index Category</b></i>
Apples	Low	Milk, fat-free or low-fat	Low
Asparagus	Low	Oatmeal	Medium
Baked russet potatoes	High	Pasta, white	Medium
Bananas	Low	Pasta, whole-grain	Low
Barley	Low	Peas	Low
Black beans	Low	Peppers, all	Low
Bran flake cereal	Medium	Pizza, white flour dough	High
Broccoli	Low	Popcorn	Medium
Brown rice	Low	Pretzels, white flour	High
Carrots	Low	Raisins	Medium
Cherries	Low	Rice cakes, white rice	High
Chickpeas	Low	Sweet potatoes	Medium
Corn	Medium	Tomatoes	Low
Corn flake cereal	High	Waffle, white flour	High
Cucumbers	Low	Watermelon	High
Donuts	High	White flour bread	High
Grapefruit	Low	White rice	Medium
Grapes	Low	Whole-wheat bread	Low
Kidney beans	Low	Yogurt	Low
Lettuce, all varieties	Low		

## **Chapter 6**

# **The Key Nutritional Components for a Flat Belly**

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## ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Understanding diet must-haves to achieve your flat belly
  - ▶ Examining true portion sizes of everyday foods
  - ▶ Increasing your metabolism with a few quick fixes
- 

To be as successful as possible with your Belly Fat Diet plan, you need to understand the impact each food group has on your belly and know which foods are best and which may have a negative impact on your weight loss efforts. One of the easiest ways to get off track with your weight loss is to be unprepared.

So in this chapter, I show you what foods you need to have on hand at all times. I take a close look at each of the food groups in the Belly Fat Diet. I also explain why these foods are necessary. After all, knowing why you should eat something versus just being told to do it is much more beneficial in helping you achieve and maintain your weight loss goals.

I also help you identify and understand one of the biggest culprits of weight gain: portion distortion. Over the past 30 years, American portions have grown larger and larger. And now you probably have become accustomed to these huge portions without even realizing it. If you continue to eat these monster-sized portions, you'll take in far more calories than your body needs. And these excess calories are stored as fat right in your belly. In this chapter, I help you identify a true portion so you can combat portion distortion and achieve a slim waistline permanently!

## **Diet Basics that Lead to a Flatter Belly**

Before I discuss each of the food groups, I want to give you a general overview of the key actions to take when beginning the Belly Fat Diet. To achieve the flat belly of your dreams, you must stick with

the following habits:

- ✓ **Include at least one belly-burning food at each meal.**
- ✓ **Eat consistently throughout the day.** Don't wait too long in between meals and don't skip meals or snacks. Doing so can lead to overeating and can even slow your metabolism.
- ✓ **Avoid as many belly-bloating foods as possible on a regular basis.** Head to Chapter 19 for a list of foods to avoid.
- ✓ **Eat food you enjoy!** If you don't treat yourself to the foods you like to eat, you won't stick with your plan.
- ✓ **Incorporate variety in your meal plan.** You can eat the same things day in and day out, but doing so will likely lead to boredom. And with boredom comes cravings for less-than-healthy foods. Switching up your meals can help keep your meal plan interesting, thus helping you to stay on track.

# The Power of Protein

Protein is essential to your body for many reasons. In fact, proteins are involved in almost all cellular function in your body! They help build and strengthen muscle tissue, build and repair cells, and process chemical reactions. Some even work as antibodies to ward off diseases and infections. Without an adequate amount of protein in your body, you would be in trouble.

Protein plays a critical role in weight loss and maintenance as well. By preserving and building lean muscle tissue and increasing the number of calories you burn during digestion, protein can help increase the amount of energy (in calories) you expend each day, promoting weight loss. It also helps to fight off hunger. Weight loss can be more difficult with an inadequate amount of protein.

Protein is found in the diet in two forms:

- ✓ **Animal proteins:** Protein in the form of beef, poultry, fish, game meats, eggs, and cheese
- ✓ **Plant-based proteins:** Protein from non-animal sources, such as tofu and other soy products, beans, and lentils



Before you get too wrapped up in eating all the protein you can get your hands on, remember the three types of protein: lean protein, medium-fat protein, and high-fat protein. Protein that contains a higher amount of fat also contains a higher number of calories per ounce. And because most high-fat protein also comes from animal sources, it's usually in the form of unhealthy, saturated fats. As you begin to add proteins to your meal plan, make sure to select lean proteins over the high-fat ones. Here's the skinny on the differences:

- ✓ **Lean protein:** Approximately 30–40 calories per ounce and 3

grams of fat or less per ounce

- ✓ **Medium-fat protein:** Approximately 45–55 calories per ounce and 5 grams of fat per ounce
- ✓ **High-fat protein:** Approximately 80–100 calories per ounce and 8 grams of fat per ounce



Because medium-and high-fat proteins contain a higher number of calories per ounce, consuming these types of proteins too often can slow your weight loss efforts. And, if they come from a source with an increased amount of saturated or trans fats, these proteins can increase inflammation, which may cause you to pack on more belly fat. So choosing lean proteins on a regular basis is essential to your success. The later section “Realizing true portion sizes” provides tables that show you which proteins are categorized as lean, medium-fat, and high-fat proteins.

In the following sections, I show you how protein impacts body weight so you can use this macronutrient to your advantage.

## Protein: The hunger fighter

One of the main reasons you need to consume an adequate amount of protein when trying to lose or maintain a healthy body weight is that protein helps fight hunger. Unlike carbohydrates, which digest quickly, protein takes much longer to process. This slow digestion helps you feel satisfied for a longer period of time. And if you aren’t feeling hungry, you’re probably not suffering from food cravings or eating too quickly, which are behaviors that can contribute to weight gain.

Visualize yourself eating a big bowl of enriched white flour pasta with nothing but tomato sauce on top. How long do you think this meal will keep you full? One hour? Two? Now picture yourself sitting down to eat out of the exact same bowl, but this time you fill it with



pieces of grilled chicken instead. You may not even be able to finish eating it, and, if you do, you'll feel uncomfortably full for four hours or more.



I don't want you to go and stuff yourself with huge bowls of chicken. The moral of the story is this: For the same number of calories, protein keeps you feeling much more satisfied for a longer period of time. And this benefit prevents you from eating too-large portions of other foods, which can pack on the pounds. So I recommend including a source of lean protein at each meal to avoid becoming too hungry in between meals and snacks.



Don't worry if you're a vegetarian or vegan. Plant-based proteins work perfectly at helping to control appetite. So if you don't consume any form of animal protein, adding a food like soy beans, lentils, or even tofu to your plate at each meal is important.

## Protein: The metabolism booster

The most exciting benefit of eating protein is that it can help you burn more calories, therefore boosting your metabolism. Protein contains a high thermic effect. A *thermic effect* is the amount of energy (in calories) your body needs to burn in order to break down, digest, and metabolize a food. Because protein contains a higher thermic effect than other macronutrients, it causes your body to burn more calories to digest it than if you ate a carbohydrate or fat.

Its high thermic effect isn't the only way protein helps to boost metabolism. Your muscle tissue, which is made up largely of protein, is the most metabolically active tissue in your body. As a result, it burns many more calories than fat cells or other tissues.



When you start to lose weight, you can lose not just fat mass but muscle mass as well. If you lose too much muscle mass, your metabolism slows. Because muscle burns such a large number of calories, losing muscle means you burn fewer calories overall during the day, slowing your metabolism. As a result, further weight loss and even weight maintenance may become difficult. Protein, however, contains an amino acid called *leucine*, which helps protect you against muscle losses while you're losing weight. So be sure to consume an adequate amount of protein as you shed pounds.

## Eating Fat to Reduce Belly Fat

Many folks think that they have to cut out fat entirely when they're trying to lose weight and belly fat. Believe it or not, though, certain dietary fats can actually help to burn belly fat. In fact, research has shown that diets rich in healthy fats promote increased fat loss, especially from the midsection. The main fat fighters are monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids. Here's how they work:

- ✓ **They help to fight off inflammation.** Inflammation can be damaging to your overall health and trigger your body to store more belly fat. By decreasing chronic inflammation in your body, these fats can help decrease internal stressors that pack on the pounds. To see how inflammation can increase belly fat, flip to Chapter 4.
- ✓ **They take longer to digest.** This extended digestion helps you feel full longer, preventing cravings and overeating. Do you remember the fat-free diet fad from the '90s? It didn't work because when you eat meals with little fat (and mostly carbohydrates), you have a limited feeling of satiety. As a result, you consume more food, and therefore more calories,

throughout the day.

- ✓ **Omega-3 fatty acids help reduce stress hormones in your body.** Having increased belly fat can be a telltale sign of having too much stress in your life. This increased level of stress causes an increase in the production of stress hormones like cortisol. This increase in stress hormone production promotes an increase in the storage of belly fat. However, having more omega-3s in your meal plan helps cut stress hormones, and therefore, cut down on the amount of belly fat they can store. For more on how stress hormones promote the storage of belly fat, head to Chapter 5.



Some dietary fats can be quite negative to your health and can increase belly fat. These are the fats you want to limit:

- ✓ **Saturated fats:** These fats are mainly found in animal proteins, so a diet rich in high-fat dairy, red meat, and processed meat is high in saturated fat. These fats have been linked with an increased risk for heart disease, elevated cholesterol levels, and inflammation in the body.  
  
A small amount of saturated fat each day is alright, but you want to make sure that less than 10 percent of your total daily calories comes from saturated fat. So on the Belly Fat Diet plan, you're allotted 14–18 grams of saturated fat per day.
- ✓ **Trans fats:** These fats are found mostly in processed foods, such as fried foods, pastries and other baked goods, biscuits, muffins, crackers, and even some brands of microwave popcorn. These fats can lower your good cholesterol, raise your bad cholesterol, and trigger inflammation. In fact, research has shown that even just 2 grams of trans fats per day can have a negative impact on your health. Because these fats can pack inches onto your waistline, you need to eliminate them from your diet to successfully reach your flat-belly goals. To identify trans fats in your foods, check out Chapter 11.



Although healthy fats can be essential for getting rid of belly fat, balance is key. Too much of a good thing can be bad, especially when it comes to fats. Healthy fats have powerful health and weight loss benefits, but they're also high in calories. So it's important that you consume just enough of these healthy fats to reap their belly-flattening benefits without consuming so much that you cancel out their effects.

Great sources of monounsaturated fats include

- ✓ Almonds
- ✓ Avocado
- ✓ Cashews
- ✓ Natural peanut or almond butter
- ✓ Olives
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Peanuts
- ✓ Peanut oil
- ✓ Sesame oil

Terrific sources of omega-3 fatty acids include

- ✓ Chia seeds
- ✓ Cod
- ✓ Flaxseed
- ✓ Halibut
- ✓ Omega-3 eggs
- ✓ Salmon
- ✓ Sardines

- ✓ Scallops
- ✓ Seaweed
- ✓ Soybeans
- ✓ Tofu
- ✓ Walnuts

In Chapter 7, I outline the number of servings of these healthy fats you should have per day based on your individual meal plan. This balance provides you with all the health benefits of these healthy fats and none of the negative impacts of eating too many or too few.

## Carbohydrates: Belly Shrinkers and Belly Bloaters

Carbohydrates play a critical role in belly fat in two ways: by increasing it or decreasing it. To successfully achieve your weight loss and belly-flattening goals, you must know the carbohydrate sources that can shrink belly fat as well as the ones that can actually increase it.



Describing the sources is pretty simple: Whole-grain carbohydrates help fight belly fat, and refined carbohydrates increase it. So the key is to identify which carbs are whole grain and which are refined. After you can distinguish one from another, you're on your way to selecting only belly-friendly carbohydrates that will have you burning up belly fat and slimming down!

The following sections give you the lowdown on both whole and refined carbohydrates.

# Identifying whole grains

A grain is made of the following three elements:

- ✓ **Bran:** This is the outer layer of the grain. It's rich in B vitamins, antioxidants, minerals, and fiber.
- ✓ **Endosperm:** This is the middle starchy layer of the grain. It's where complex carbohydrates and some proteins are found.
- ✓ **Germ:** This innermost layer of the grain is rich in B vitamins, vitamin E, minerals, antioxidants, and even essential fatty acids.

A whole grain, which is basically in its original form, contains all three of these important elements, making it rich in essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, complex carbohydrates, and fiber.



When trying to find whole-grain products, you need to look closely at the packaging. Look for the words “100%” followed by a grain on the product packaging. If your product says “100% whole wheat,” for example, you’re getting all parts of the grain, or a whole-grain product. You can also look at the ingredients. The first ingredient is what makes up the majority of the food. The first ingredient should be a “whole” product like whole-wheat flour or whole-rye flour. If the second ingredient lists a “whole” ingredient (and the first one doesn’t) you can’t be sure of the proportion of whole grain in the product, so it may not be your best choice.

# Avoiding refined carbohydrates

Refined carbohydrates are processed, or refined, to remove layers of the original grain (see the preceding section for details on the layers). Typically, when grains are refined both the inner layer (germ) and outer layer (bran) are removed, leaving just the middle starchy layer (endosperm). This processing leaves behind all the energy (calories) but little to no fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. About 25 percent of the protein in the grain is removed during refining as well.



Some processors replace some vitamins and minerals to their products. These products are known as *enriched grains*. However, these enriched grains don't contain the original amount of antioxidants, fiber, or protein of the whole grain.

When trying to identify a refined grain, look for any of the following terms as the first ingredient listed on the product packaging:

- ✓ Bran flour (without the word “whole”)
- ✓ Cornmeal
- ✓ Durum wheat
- ✓ Enriched flour
- ✓ Mixed grain
- ✓ Multigrain
- ✓ Semolina
- ✓ Unbleached flour
- ✓ Wheat flour (without the word “whole”)

You want to see the word “whole” before any grain; otherwise, some parts of the grain may be missing and won't provide all the nutrients

and nutrient benefits.

## **Comparing the impact of whole grains and refined carbohydrates on belly fat**

When you eat a refined grain, you're consuming mostly carbohydrates with very little fiber or protein to help slow down the absorption of the food. Because digestion happens rapidly, your body quickly converts the carbohydrates into glucose (sugar). After glucose enters your bloodstream, your body releases insulin to bring the sugar into your cells for energy. But here's where the problem arises: When your blood sugar increases quickly (which is what happens when a food is digested rapidly), your body releases that much more insulin to quickly bring your blood sugar back down by transporting it into your cells.



Insulin is one of the main culprits of belly fat (see Chapter 2 to understand why). The more insulin that's introduced into your bloodstream, the more your body stores fat, specifically belly fat.

All foods create an insulin response. However, certain foods, specifically refined carbohydrates and simple sugars, cause the largest spike in insulin, which is why you want to avoid them. These foods not only lack nutrients, but because of the insulin response, they also store belly fat — even if you keep your overall calories reduced!

Whole grains trigger an insulin response, but because of the fiber and protein in the whole grain, this response is reduced. As a result, you have less insulin circulating throughout your body, and therefore less belly fat is being stored.





Just because all grains, even whole grains, cause an insulin response doesn't mean that you should avoid them all together. Carbohydrates are essential to your body in many ways, with the main reason being energy. If you reduce your intake of grains too much, you may notice a dip in energy levels. In fact, you may even have trouble thinking clearly (because sugar is the main source of energy for your brain).

You need whole grains daily. Besides helping you achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, these grains have quite a few health benefits, including the following:

- ✓ Reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- ✓ Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and help promoting the maintenance of blood sugar levels
- ✓ Reduction in cancers related to the digestive system
- ✓ Help in lowering cholesterol
- ✓ Help in maintaining digestive system regularity

## **Reviewing the whole grain and hunger connection**

In addition to limiting the insulin response, whole grains help promote weight loss and a reduction in belly fat in another way: They help control your appetite. Because whole grains are digested more slowly than their refined counterparts, they help provide an increased feeling of satiety after eating. However, when you eat a refined carbohydrate and promote an increase in insulin, not only does the insulin store fat, but it also increases your appetite. So after eating a refined carbohydrate, you may feel hungrier sooner and even experience cravings for more simple sugars. As a result, you end up in a cycle of eating too many refined carbohydrates over and over, which just causes you to continue to pack on belly fat.

By decreasing hunger and preventing cravings, whole grains can help you stay on track with your Belly Fat Diet plan, helping you to achieve your weight loss goals even faster.

## **Fruit: It's Essential, but Watch the Sugar**

Fruit is an essential component of a healthy meal plan. It's not only essential for good health, but it's also needed for sustainable weight loss. Fruit provides you with a large amount of antioxidants, fiber, phytochemicals, and carbohydrates. And the best benefit of fruit is that it provides you with a sweet satisfaction, which can help reduce cravings for less-than-belly-friendly sweets like candy.

Studies have shown that people who eat a large amount of fruit lose more weight than people who eat a large amount of vegetables (but not as much fruit). What a great incentive to start eating more fruit!



Even though fruit has many powerful health benefits and can promote weight loss, you still need to watch your intake of it. Fruit is rich in vitamins and minerals, but it's also rich in natural sugars. These sugars are fine to eat, but if you consume more natural sugars than your body truly needs, you may find that the increased intake slows or even stops your weight loss efforts.

In this section, I show you the best fruits to consume and tell you which ones to limit. In the later section “Realizing true portion sizes,” I explain what a portion of fruit actually is. In Chapter 7, I show you how many portions of fruit per day are recommended (based on your individual meal plan) so you gain all the benefits from fruit without any of the negative effects.

### **The best fruits for your belly**

All fruits contain health benefits, such as providing you with large amounts of disease-and inflammation-fighting antioxidants, but some fruits play a more powerful role in shrinking belly fat than others. The following sections uncover some of the most powerful belly-fighting fruits and why you want to eat them.

## Blueberries

Blueberries may be small, but they're powerhouses! These tasty berries have many health and weight loss benefits. Consider the following:

- ✓ They're powerful inflammation fighters thanks to their super-high antioxidant content.
- ✓ They're potent belly shrinkers. A study at the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center found that when rats consumed just 2 percent of their calories from blueberries over a 90-day period, they significantly reduced their percentage of belly fat.
- ✓ According to a study by the University of Michigan, they can reduce triglyceride levels and increase insulin sensitivity, perhaps cutting the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- ✓ They have been shown to help reduce food cravings.

## Pomegranate

Pomegranates with their red, juicy seeds are a potent tool to include in your weight loss arsenal. Here are the main benefits:

- ✓ They have some of the highest levels of antioxidants when compared to many fruits.
- ✓ They contain high levels of the polyphenol *catechin*. This powerful chemical has been shown to increase your body's fat-burning potential and may even help to boost metabolism, making it a strong belly-fat fighter. To further promote weight loss, catechins may also decrease appetite, helping to prevent overeating.
- ✓ They may help decrease fat buildup in the arteries, making them as healthy for the heart as they are for your waistline.

## Tart cherries

Tart cherries are rich in the plant chemical *anthocyanin*. Not only does this chemical give the cherries their bright color, but it also helps you burn belly fat.

A study conducted by the University of Michigan found that when mice were given food that contained added tart cherry powder, their body fat reduced by 9 percent more than mice fed the same diet without the additional cherry powder. Even better, most of the weight loss came from fat stores in the abdominal area. The mice fed the cherry powder also showed significant decreases in cholesterol levels as well as a decline in inflammatory markers.



Tart cherries are different from the sweet cherries you may often eat raw. They're not usually found in the fresh produce aisle. Instead, you can usually find them frozen or dried. Just be sure you buy an unsweetened variety.

## Grapefruit

Grapefruit is a super fat burner. It also has diuretic properties, which help you shed any unwanted water retention, leaving you looking and feeling slimmer, especially in the midsection. This refreshing citrus fruit has long been linked with many promising studies touting its weight loss benefits. Here are a couple to chew on:

- ✓ A 2011 study in *Nutrition & Metabolism* by researchers at Vanderbilt University found that when obese adults consumed half a grapefruit or 4 ounces of 100 percent grapefruit juice before three main meals, they experienced a significant decrease in both body weight and waist circumference. Why? Perhaps the high water content and volume of the grapefruit prior to meals helped make them feel fuller sooner, allowing them to eat smaller portions at the next meals.
- ✓ A 2009 study in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that eating a low-glycemic-index food, such as grapefruit, for breakfast before exercising helps you burn 50 percent more fat. (Check out Chapter 5 for more information on glycemic index.)



If you're taking medications, make sure to check with your doctor or pharmacist before eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice. Grapefruit products can have potentially adverse interactions with some medications.

## **More fruits to enjoy**

No fruit is bad for your belly as long as you consume the right portions per day (I provide guidelines based on your individual meal plan in Chapter 7). In the preceding sections, I list some of the best fruits for your belly, but you have many, many more great options, including

- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Blackberries
- ✓ Grapes
- ✓ Mango
- ✓ Nectarines
- ✓ Oranges
- ✓ Peaches
- ✓ Pears
- ✓ Plums
- ✓ Raspberries
- ✓ Strawberries



## The fruits to limit

Fruit is great for you, but you do have to keep in mind the glycemic index (GI) of the type you choose. Choosing foods with a lower GI can help promote the loss of belly fat (see Chapter 5 for details). Most fruits are in the low range on the GI scale, but a few are higher, most specifically watermelon. Because it has an elevated GI, watermelon may cause spikes in both blood sugar and insulin levels, which can trigger storage of belly fat.

Watermelon isn't all bad, however. Out of almost all fruits and vegetables, it contains the highest content of *lycopene*, which is a phytochemical that has been shown to protect the heart by decreasing the buildup of plaque in the arteries. Some studies have also shown a positive correlation between increased lycopene intake and a decreased risk of certain cancers, such as prostate cancer. Watermelon is also rich in the amino acid *arginine*, which has been shown to promote fat loss and increase muscle mass.



You don't need to avoid watermelon, just watch how often you eat it and how much you eat at one sitting. For the best belly-flattening results, keep your watermelon intake to about 1 cup per day. This way you get all the great benefits of watermelon without too much impact on your insulin levels.

Other fruits that can contain a high GI include

- ✓ **Dried fruits with added sugar:** When choosing dried fruit, buy brands that only contain fruit. Dried fruits that list sugar, cane juice, or corn syrup in the ingredients are loaded with added sweeteners that can raise your GI and promote increased belly fat storage.
- ✓ **Fruits that have been canned in heavy syrup:** If you enjoy canned fruits, choose varieties canned in 100 percent fruit juice

rather than those packed in syrups.

- ✓ **Fruit juices, specifically juices that aren't 100 percent juice:**  
Because juices contain limited amounts of fiber, they aren't as filling as eating a piece of fruit. They also may potentially raise blood sugar and insulin levels higher than a piece of fruit would. If you do have juice, drink it in moderation (approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup per day). Also be sure to select a brand that contains only 100 percent fruit juice. If you love juice in larger quantities, try this trick: Dilute 4 ounces of juice with 8 ounces of water for a delicious and refreshing beverage with less sugar.



To identify and avoid these high-GI fruits, make sure you read labels. You can find out more about reading labels in Chapter 11.

## Vegetables: You Gotta Have 'Em

Vegetables can help to shrink belly fat and promote weight loss in so many great ways! One of the greatest benefits of vegetables when you're trying to lose weight is that they provide you with a great amount of volume and satiety with few calories.

Think about it this way: If you were hungry and ate six plain crackers, would you feel full? Probably not. What if you ate 6 cups of raw, sliced cucumbers? I bet you would feel a lot more satisfied. And what if I told you that 6 cups of cucumbers contains the same number of calories as those six crackers? Amazing! That's one of the benefits of vegetables: You can eat plates full of them without taking in many calories. If you ate plates full of other foods, on the other hand, you'd gain weight. But when you eat large amounts of vegetables, you feel satisfied and eat less of other food groups, helping you to shed weight quickly without feeling hungry or deprived!



Most vegetables on your Belly Fat Diet plan are unlimited. In fact, I want you to eat lots of them. I want you to strive to take in at least the minimum recommended amount of vegetables each day (see Chapter 7 for your individual meal plan guidelines). If you don't eat enough vegetables, chances are you'll feel hungrier and eat more of another food group, which will contain additional calories that can make it more difficult to lose weight.

I provide all the info you need on adding veggies to your diet in the following sections.

## Getting your antioxidants

In addition to helping you feel full with few calories, vegetables also help promote weight loss by being rich in many powerful antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. Some of these nutrients, such as catechins and anthocyanins, by themselves can help increase your body's ability to burn fat. But as a whole, antioxidants help to decrease oxidative stress in your body.

Your body needs oxygen to live and to perform many essential functions. However, high concentrations of oxygen in your body can actually cause damage. The way you obtain energy to live and perform day-to-day functions is by taking the fuel you put in your body (food) and combining it with the air you breathe (oxygen). This metabolic process provides your body with energy, but it also creates byproducts, such as free radicals, that can be damaging to your body's cells.

*Oxidative stress* is essentially the stress placed on your body from the free radicals produced during digestion and metabolism as well as the environmental toxins your body is exposed to, such as pollutants in the air, cigarette smoke, and so on. Poor dietary habits, such as diets high in simple sugars and trans fats and low in antioxidants, can increase the oxidative damage to your cells as well.



Increased oxidative stress can increase inflammation in the body. And, as I describe in Chapter 4, inflammation can trigger increased fat storage, especially in the belly. The good news is that antioxidants are warriors that fight off the free radicals that can attack and damage your body's cells. Because vegetables contain incredibly high amounts of antioxidants, the more you eat, the more you increase your defense mechanisms against these attackers, cutting down on cell damage as well as

inflammation. And when inflammation decreases, so does belly fat!

# **Filling your plate with color**

Have you ever heard the rule to eat a rainbow on your plate? Maybe in school? Well even though this guideline may sound a bit childish, adults need to eat the colors of the rainbow as much as little ones. Every color vegetable contains a different type and amount of antioxidants. If you only eat one or two colors, you may be missing out on some potent belly fat and disease fighters. In the following sections, I give you the lowdown on some of the best colors of fresh vegetables.

## **Orange and yellow vegetables**

The orange and yellow group is terrific for your skin, eyes, and heart. Some research also suggests this group may fight off some cancers. Beta carotene is plentiful in this group. This compound has been shown to promote eye health and protect skin from sun damage, and it may even delay cognitive aging. Beta carotene is also a precursor for vitamin A, meaning it's a vitamin that can help neutralize the damage of free radicals in the body, helping to fight off oxidative stress and inflammation. This group of veggies is also rich in vitamin C, which can help decrease stress hormones in the body, helping to prevent storage of belly fat.

Examples of orange and yellow vegetables include

- ✓ Carrots
- ✓ Corn
- ✓ Pumpkin
- ✓ Summer squash
- ✓ Sweet potatoes
- ✓ Yellow and orange peppers
- ✓ Yellow tomatoes

## **Green vegetables**

The green vegetable group contains high levels of vitamins A and C, which, just like in orange and yellow vegetables, can help decrease oxidative stress and cut down on the stress hormones in the body that can store belly fat. In addition, green leafy vegetables are a fantastic source of folic acid, which plays a critical role in protein digestion and metabolism. Because adequate folic acid helps ensure that protein is metabolized properly, it may also help your body's insulin levels remain stable. Spiking or rapidly fluctuating insulin levels can trigger fat storage, especially in the belly. So consuming foods rich in folic acid may help to better stabilize insulin levels, decreasing the storage of belly fat.



Examples of green vegetables include

- ✓ Asparagus
- ✓ Broccoli
- ✓ Brussels sprouts
- ✓ Cabbage
- ✓ Cucumbers
- ✓ Green beans
- ✓ Kale
- ✓ Lettuce
- ✓ Spinach
- ✓ Zucchini

## White vegetables

The white group is colored by pigments called *anthoxanthins*, which contain disease-fighting chemicals like allicin. This chemical may help reduce overall cholesterol and blood pressure levels as well as fight off inflammation in the body.

Examples of the white vegetables include

- ✓ Cauliflower
- ✓ Mushrooms
- ✓ Onions
- ✓ Parsnips
- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Turnips

## Red and purple vegetables

The red coloring of these vegetables is an indication they're high in the phytochemical lycopene. This nutrient is a potent antioxidant that has been shown to protect your heart (by decreasing the buildup of plaque in your arteries) and may even protect against cancers like prostate cancer.

Examples of red and purple vegetables include

- ✓ Beets
- ✓ Eggplant
- ✓ Red cabbage
- ✓ Red onions
- ✓ Red peppers
- ✓ Tomatoes

## Starchy vegetables: Good for you in limited quantities

As I mention earlier, many vegetables are essentially unlimited because they provide so many health benefits and so much volume with so few calories. A few vegetables are the exception to this rule, however. These are known as *starchy vegetables*. These vegetables are still loaded with healthy and belly-shrinking benefits, but they're higher in carbohydrates and calories, so they can't be consumed in unlimited quantities.



Eating too many of these starchy vegetables may slow down your weight loss progress. So for your Belly Fat Diet plan, these particular vegetables fall into the starch category, which is the same food group that contains breads, cereal, and pasta. (The

starchy veggies have an equivalent amount of carbohydrates per serving as these bread products.) In Chapter 7, I show you just how many servings of starch you can have per day based on your individual meal plan. The vegetables that fall into the starch category are

- ✓ Beans and lentils
- ✓ Corn
- ✓ Peas
- ✓ Plantains
- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Sweet potatoes
- ✓ Winter squash (acorn, butternut, spaghetti, pumpkin)
- ✓ Yams

# Dairy Done Right

Consuming an adequate amount of dairy products, such as milk and yogurt, is important to your success with your Belly Fat Diet plan. Dairy products are packed with whey, a protein that helps promote the formation of lean body mass (which in turn helps you burn more calories). Because dairy contains a high level of protein, it helps keep you feeling full and satisfied. As a result, you reduce your portions and, therefore, promote weight loss.

Some research has found that a diet rich in dairy may also directly promote weight loss. A study published in *Obesity Research* showed that obese individuals who ate a diet rich in dairy lost significantly more body fat and weight than other individuals eating the same number of calories but following a low-dairy diet. In fact, the dairy-rich group lost almost double the amount of fat and weight. The best part was that a majority of the fat lost came from the midsection. So increasing your intake of dairy may help you flatten your belly faster than just cutting calories alone.

These findings may be in part due to calcium's crucial role in regulating how fat is stored and broken down by the body. Researchers think that the more calcium a fat cell has, the more fat it will burn. Dairy products are also rich in the amino acid arginine, which has been shown to help promote fat loss and increase muscle mass. Other studies have shown that an increased intake of dietary calcium may also increase fat excretion in stool. So a diet high in calcium may slightly decrease calorie absorption from dietary fat intake, which may help promote weight loss as well.



For the Belly Fat Diet, the dairy group consists of milk and yogurt. Cheese falls into the protein food group. Here's why: Milk and yogurt contain high levels of both protein and carbohydrates as well as fat depending on the variety you

choose, and cheese contains just protein and fat.

In the following sections, I give you the skinny on blasting belly fat by increasing your dairy intake.

## CLA and belly fat

Dairy products may help to promote weight loss because of a fatty acid called *conjugated linoleic acid* (CLA). This acid is found mainly in dairy and beef products and has recently been gaining attention for its potential to aid in weight loss. In fact, if you look in any supplement store, you can find many products containing CLA promoted for weight and fat loss. One reason CLA may help promote weight loss is that it's thought to help trigger fat cells to shrink and die off.

Some promising research shows that these claims may be true. Animal studies show that mice consuming a diet high in CLA had significant reductions in body fat. However, more research is needed in the human population. The few studies that have been done show that the results of an increased intake of CLA weren't as significant in humans as they were in mice. And one other caution: In animal studies, a high CLA intake actually caused fatty liver disease in some test samples.

All is not lost, however. CLA has also shown some potential to improve insulin resistance, decrease blood sugar levels, and fight off some cancers. Human studies seem to indicate that 3.2 grams of CLA daily may help reduce body fat and promote health benefits. Foods don't list the CLA content on nutrition labels, but consuming the correct portions of dairy and protein on your Belly Fat Diet plan can help you to take in adequate CLA.



Due to the findings in some studies that high supplemental levels of CLA can potentially increase the risk of fatty liver disease, I recommend increasing your intake of CLA through food. If you wish to consume CLA as a supplement, make sure to speak to your physician first to make sure doing so is appropriate for you.

# Choosing the right milk and yogurt

Dairy can play a huge role in helping to reduce belly fat, but it's important to make sure you're choosing the right forms of dairy. A stroll down the milk aisle in your grocery store shows that the options are vast. Should you buy low-fat, full-fat, organic, nondairy? The decision can feel overwhelming. That's why I give you some simple guidelines here to help you select the best milk and yogurt for your belly without spending half your day examining the cartons.



## Milking it

You want to choose low-fat milk. Full-fat and 2 percent milk is rich in saturated fat, which can clog arteries and trigger an increase in inflammation. Aim to choose either 0 percent fat (skim) or 1 percent fat milk as your milk of choice.

Also, select dairy that comes from grass-fed cows whenever possible. Cows that feed on grass and grains have a much more favorable milk composition, such as a higher CLA content. In fact, it's believed that milk from grass-fed cows contains almost five times more CLA than grain-fed cows. Cows fed a diet composed of mostly grains, blood meal, or bone meal contain higher levels of unhealthy fats and little to no CLA. Some organic milk contains milk from grass-fed cows, but not all. So check the labels to be sure.



Some individuals can't tolerate dairy or prefer to remove it from their diets. No problem. Suitable substitutes include soy, almond, and coconut milk. Rice milk isn't recommended (unless you have allergies to the other milk substitutes) because it contains a higher percentage of carbohydrates and a lower percentage of protein than other milk alternatives. When choosing nondairy milk substitutes, unsweetened varieties are the best choice. If you do select a sweetened variety, pick a brand with 10 grams of sugar or less per cup, and try to avoid brands that contain high fructose corn syrup in the ingredients.

## Picking yogurt

Do you find the sea of never-ending yogurt options in the grocery store a bit overwhelming? You're not alone! Between light yogurt, plain, flavored, Greek, and everything in between, it can feel like an impossible decision to choose the best yogurt for your belly and health. No need to feel defeated. Just use these simple guidelines:

- ✓ **Choose low-fat or fat-free yogurt (0 percent or 1 percent) over the higher fat varieties.** You can go for plain or Greek yogurt. Greek yogurt is strained, providing it with a thicker consistency and a higher protein content, which can fill you up.
- ✓ **Watch out for flavored yogurts.** These varieties often contain large amounts of added sugars. All yogurt contains some naturally occurring sugar, so no need to choose a sugar-free yogurt, but do look at the labels. Aim for a yogurt with no more than 15 grams of sugar per 8-ounce serving.

## Portion Distortion: When Enough Just Isn't Enough Anymore

Portion distortion is the phenomenon that occurs when you start to view excessively large portions as the normal servings you should eat. When eating in a restaurant, you can see that portions have been slowly increasing in size. Over the past 20 to 30 years, portions on average have increased dramatically. Check out the portion increase statistics in Table 6-1.

<b>Table 6-1</b>	<b>Portion Increases in Restaurant Foods</b>	
<i>Food</i>	<i>20 years ago</i>	<i>Today</i>
Bagel	3-inch diameter, 140 calories	6-inch diameter, 350 calories
Cheeseburger	4 ounces, 330 calories	8 ounces, 590 calories
Spaghetti	1 cup with 3 small meatballs, 500 calories	2 cups with 3 large meatballs, 1,025 calories
French Fries	2.4 ounces, 210 calories	6.9 ounces, 610 calories
Soda	6.5 ounces, 80 calories	20 ounces, 250 calories

Source: USDA



Even if you have been ordering the same foods at restaurants over the years, you can be gaining weight simply because the portions continue to enlarge. What's worse is that you may view these super-sized portions as normal. As a result, you're now conditioned to recognize these portions as standard and you may fill your plate with more food than your body really needs — whether you're eating out or at home.

So what's the solution? I don't want you to shrink your portions overnight. If you go cold turkey on your portion sizes, you'll find yourself hungry and feeling deprived. And deprivation can lead to everything from cravings to binge eating, which isn't the solution to weight loss. The solution to permanent weight loss is to eat filling foods that are low in calories. That way you can continue to fill your plate but actually take in fewer calories overall without feeling hungry or deprived.

For example, check out the food comparisons in Figure 6-1. Consider which options help you feel more satisfied for a longer period of time.

I show you the true portion sizes of some of the most common foods in the following sections. I also show you how to trick yourself into thinking you're eating more.

# Realizing true portion sizes

In order to be successful with your weight loss and belly-flattening efforts, you need to be able to identify a true portion of food. Being able to do so helps you recognize portion distortion, which can cause you to overeat without even realizing it.

The following sections outline the true portion sizes in each food group of your Belly Fat Diet plan. These portion sizes are based on the American Diabetes Association (ADA) Diabetic Exchange List.

**Figure 6-1:**  
High-calorie  
foods versus  
high-volume,  
low-calorie  
foods.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*



To find out how alcohol fits into your Belly Fat Diet plan, including the portions allowed, head to Chapter 17.

## Fruits and vegetables

In Chapter 7, I outline exactly how many servings of fruits and vegetables you need each day to stay on track with your Belly Fat Diet plan and achieve your weight loss goals. But what exactly is a serving? In Table 6-2, I show you just how much of a certain vegetable or certain fruit is considered one serving. This information can help you see whether you're eating too little, too much, or just enough.

<b>Table 6-2      Portion Sizes of Fruits and Vegetables</b>	
<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
Cooked vegetables	½ cup
Raw vegetables	1 cup
100% vegetable juice	6 ounces
Whole fruit (apples, oranges, pears, peaches, and so on)	1 medium piece (size of a baseball)
Bananas	Half of a medium banana
Berries, melons, grapes	1 cup
Canned fruit in juice	½ cup
No-sugar-added dried fruit	¼ cup
100% fruit juice	½ cup

## Dairy

For the Belly Fat Diet plan, the dairy group contains milk and yogurt. Cheese and eggs are included in the protein group. Consuming adequate dairy during the day is essential to making sure you're taking in adequate amounts of CLA, calcium, vitamin D, and protein. Table 6-3 outlines what a serving of dairy is equal to. In Chapter 7, you can see how many servings of dairy you need each day on your individualized meal plan.

<b>Table 6-3                      Portion Sizes of Dairy Products</b>	
<b><i>Food or Drink</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
Fat-free or 1% milk	1 cup
Soy or almond milk (with less than 10 grams of sugar per cup)	1 cup
<b><i>Food or Drink</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
2% or whole milk (equals 1 dairy + 1 fat serving)	1 cup
Fat-free or lowfat plain yogurt	1 cup
Fat-free or lowfat flavored yogurt (15 grams of sugar or less per serving)	1 cup
2% or full-fat yogurt (equals 1 dairy + 1 fat serving)	1 cup
Fat-free or 1% Greek yogurt (equals 1 dairy + 1 protein)	1 cup
Fat-free or lowfat pudding	½ cup

## Starches

The starch group incorporates everything from breads to cereal to snack foods and even starchy vegetables. The trickiest part with starches is to know how many servings you should eat each day and what a serving size truly is. In Chapter 7, I provide you with individualized meal plan goals for daily starch servings. In Table 6-4, I list what portion is equal to one serving. Limit your intake of refined starches as much as possible.

<b>Table 6-4 Portion Sizes of Starches</b>	
<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
<b>Breads and Sides</b>	
100% whole-grain bread	1 slice
100% whole-grain cereal	½ cup
Cooked steel-cut oatmeal	½ cup
Cooked whole-grain pasta	½ cup
Cooked brown or wild rice	½ cup
Cooked whole-grain couscous	½ cup
Cooked quinoa	½ cup
Whole-grain tortillas	One 6-inch tortilla
Whole-grain English muffin	Half of a muffin
Whole-grain pita	Half of a 6-inch pita
Whole-grain bagel	A quarter of a large, deli-size bagel
Whole-grain flour	3 tablespoons

<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
<b>Snack Foods</b>	
Air-popped popcorn	3 cups
Whole-grain pretzels	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
Whole-grain crackers	6 crackers (or 1 ounce)
Whole-grain baked chips	15 chips
Graham crackers	3 squares
Dark chocolate (equals 1 starch + 1 fat serving)	1 ounce
<b>Starchy Vegetables</b>	
Cooked corn	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Corn on the cob	1 medium ear
Cooked beans and lentils	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Cooked peas	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Plantains	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Baked russet potato	3 ounces
Baked sweet potato	3 ounces
Cooked winter squash	1 cup
<b>Refined Starches</b>	
White or Italian bread	1 slice
White rice	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
White rice cakes	2 large cakes
Cookies (1 starch + 2 fats)	One $2\frac{1}{4}$ -inch cookie
Ice cream (lowfat) or frozen yogurt (1 starch + 1 fat)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
White flour	3 tablespoons
Sugar, syrup, jelly, or honey	1 tablespoon



## **Proteins**

Protein is essential to your belly-blasting plan because it helps to keep you full and prevents muscle loss while losing fat mass.

However, you need to take in the right amount of protein each day.

Taking in too much or too little can sabotage your weight loss efforts. In Chapter 7, I show you how many servings of protein you need each day on your Belly Fat Diet plan. In Tables 6-5 and 6-6, I categorize the protein into two groups: lean protein and medium/high-fat protein. Except where noted, one serving size of each of the foods in the following tables equals 1 ounce of protein.

**Table 6-5 Portion Sizes of Lean Protein Choices**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Size of a Serving</b>
<b>Fish</b>	
All fish, including salmon, flounder, halibut, trout, cod, tilapia, herring, grouper, swordfish, and so on	1 ounce
Canned tuna in water	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Canned sardines in water	2 sardines
Shellfish (clams, shrimp, crab, lobster, scallops, oysters, and so on)	1 ounce
Imitation shellfish	1 ounce
<b>Poultry</b>	
Chicken breast, white meat, skinless	1 ounce
Turkey breast, white meat, skinless	1 ounce
Cornish hen, skinless	1 ounce
Ground turkey, 100% breast meat	1 ounce
Ground chicken, 100% breast meat	1 ounce
<b>Pork</b>	
Tenderloin	1 ounce
Center chop loin	1 ounce
Fresh ham	1 ounce
Boiled ham	1 ounce
Canadian bacon	1 ounce
<b>Beef</b> (for all cuts, choose USDA Select and Choice cuts and trim all visible fat)	
Flank steak	1 ounce
Round	1 ounce
Tenderloin	1 ounce
Eye of round roast or steak	1 ounce
Sirloin tip side steak	1 ounce
Top round roast and steak	1 ounce
Bottom round roast and steak	1 ounce
Top sirloin steak	1 ounce

<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
<b>Game</b>	
Buffalo (bison)	1 ounce
Venison	1 ounce
Ostrich	1 ounce
Goose (cooked without skin)	1 ounce
<b>Lamb</b>	
Leg of lamb	1 ounce
Loin chops	1 ounce
Loin shoulder	1 ounce
<b>Cheese</b>	
Fat-free or part-skim varieties with 3 grams of fat or less per ounce	1 ounce
Fat-free or part-skim cottage cheese	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Fat-free or part-skim ricotta cheese	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Parmesan cheese	2 tablespoons
<b>Other</b>	
Legumes/lentils (equals 1 protein and 1 starch serving)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Eggs	1 egg
Egg whites	2 egg whites or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup liquid egg substitute
Tofu	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Edamame	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Vegetable burger	1 burger (equals 2 ounces protein)
Deli meat (choose varieties with 3 grams of fat or less per serving)	1 ounce

**Table 6-6 Portion Sizes of Medium- and High-Fat Protein Choices**

<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
<b>Fish</b>	
Fried fish	1 ounce
Fried shellfish	1 ounce
Sautéed fish or shellfish in oil/butter	1 ounce

<b><i>Food</i></b>	<b><i>Size of a Serving</i></b>
<b>Fish</b>	
Tuna canned in oil	½ cup
<b>Poultry</b>	
Chicken, dark meat	1 ounce
Chicken, with skin	1 ounce
Turkey, dark meat	1 ounce
Turkey, with skin	1 ounce
Fried chicken or turkey	1 ounce
Ground chicken/turkey, dark meat	½ cup
<b>Pork</b>	
Top loin	1 ounce
Chop	1 ounce
Cutlet	1 ounce
Boston butt	1 ounce
Taylor ham	1 ounce
Spare ribs	1 ounce
Ground pork	1 ounce
Pork sausage	1 ounce
Bacon	3 slices
Hot dog	1 ounce
<b>Beef</b> ( <i>any USDA Prime grade of meat counts as a medium/high-fat protein</i> )	
Ground beef	½ cup
Corned beef	1 ounce
Filet mignon	1 ounce
Porterhouse steak	1 ounce
New York strip steak	1 ounce
T-bone	1 ounce
Rib-eye	1 ounce
Prime rib	1 ounce
Short rib	1 ounce
<b>Lamb</b>	
Rib roast	1 ounce
Ground lamb	1 ounce

<i><b>Food</b></i>	<i><b>Size of a Serving</b></i>
<b>Cheese</b>	
Part-skim or full-fat cheese with more than 3 grams of fat per ounce	1 ounce
<b>Other</b>	
Sandwich meats with more than 3 grams of fat per ounce	1 ounce

## Fats

Fats play a critical role in your Belly Fat Diet plan. In fact, some fats even help to burn belly fat. I've divided the fats in Table 6-7 into two groups so you can easily identify which fats are best for your belly and which fats can pack on the fat. In Chapter 7, I show you how many servings of fat you should have each day. And in the following table, I explain what portion is equal to one serving of fat.

Table 6-7		Portion Sizes of Fats
Food	Size of a Serving	
Belly-Friendly Fats		
Oil (olive, canola, peanut, grapeseed)	1 teaspoon	
Nut butter, natural	2 teaspoons	
Hummus	2 tablespoons	
Tahini paste	2 teaspoons	
Avocado	Quarter of an avocado	
Olives	8 large	
Almonds	6 nuts	
Cashews	6 nuts	
Peanuts	10 nuts	
Pistachios	10 nuts	
Pecans	4 halves	
Walnuts	4 halves or 1 tablespoon crushed	
Seeds (flax, chia, sesame, pumpkin, sunflower)	1 tablespoon	
Salad dressing, olive oil-based, trans-fat-free	1 tablespoon	

<i><b>Food</b></i>	<i><b>Size of a Serving</b></i>
<b>Belly-Friendly Fats</b>	
Salad dressing, reduced fat	2 tablespoons
Spreads, olive oil- or canola oil-based	1 teaspoon
<b>Less-than-Belly-Friendly Fats</b>	
Butter, stick	1 teaspoon
Butter, whipped	1 teaspoon
Shortening	1 teaspoon
Lard	1 teaspoon
Creamer	2 tablespoons
Sour cream	2 tablespoons
Cream cheese	1 tablespoon

## Condiments and seasonings

Condiments and seasonings are a great way to add flavor and variety to your meals. Many seasonings and spices can be used in unlimited amounts. However, a few condiments do contain some calories or even small amounts of sugar. These condiments are allowed on your Belly Fat Diet plan, but you do need to monitor the portions. In Table 6-8, I show you what seasonings and condiments are unlimited and which ones you need to measure.

Table 6-8 Portion Sizes of Belly-Friendly Condiments and Seasonings	
<i>Food</i>	<i>Size of a Serving</i>
All dry seasonings and spices	Unlimited
Barbeque sauce	1 tablespoon per day
Garlic	Unlimited
Horseradish	½ cup per day
Ketchup (choose no-sugar-added varieties)	2 tablespoons per day
Lemon and lime juice (in cooking)	¼ cup per day
Mustard	¼ cup per day
Nonstick cooking sprays	Unlimited
Pickle relish	1 tablespoon per day
Pickles (avoid brands with added sugars)	3 pickles per day
Salsa (choose fresh varieties)	Unlimited
<i>Food</i>	<i>Size of a Serving</i>
Soy sauce (choose low-sodium varieties)	2 teaspoons per day
Taco seasoning	1 tablespoon per day
Teriyaki sauce (choose low-sodium varieties)	2 teaspoons per day
Vinegar	Unlimited
Worcestershire sauce	2 tablespoons per day

**Table 6-8 Portion Sizes of Belly-Friendly Condiments and Seasonings**

## Trimming your portions to trim your waistline

To help you balance your food intake and stay within the



To help you balance your food intake and stay within the recommended portions per day without feeling hungry or deprived, you have a few strategies to use:

- ✓ **Try using smaller plates.** Many times you can eat with your eyes rather than your stomach. When using a large plate, you may fill your plate so it looks visually appealing, even if that amount is more food than you truly need. Using a smaller plate, such as a salad plate rather than a dinner plate, is a great way to trick yourself into thinking that your plate is full even though you're filling it with smaller amounts of food.
- ✓ **Visualize your plate divided into four equal sections.** Fill two of these sections with nonstarchy vegetables, one section with lean protein, and the last section with a whole-grain starch. By doing so, you have filled your plate. But half of your plate is filled with low-calorie, but quite filling, vegetables, helping you keep your portions of protein and starch in check.

# Revving Up Your Metabolism

*Metabolism* is the process by which the body makes and uses energy (calories) for everything from the cellular absorption of nutrients to running a marathon. Efficiently metabolizing calories can lead to a healthier body weight and a reduction in belly fat. In other words, the better your metabolism, the more calories you burn throughout the day. Because weight loss and body fat loss are dependent on creating a calorie deficit, increasing your metabolism makes losing weight and keeping it off easier.

Metabolism can decline for many reasons, including the following:

- ✓ **Aging:** As you age, your metabolism begins to slow. This slowing is due in part to a decline in muscle mass. However, if you start to build muscle back (using the belly-blasting workouts in Chapter 10), you can begin to increase your metabolism.
- ✓ **Lifestyle behaviors:** Behaviors, such as being sedentary, being under large amounts of stress, skipping meals, and not getting adequate sleep, can negatively impact your metabolism.



The good news is that a decline in metabolism doesn't have to be permanent. You can increase it and, therefore, the number of calories you burn each day. I show you how in the following sections.

## Noshing on foods that fire up your metabolism

Some foods, seasonings, and spices directly boost your metabolism (and therefore promote fat loss and weight reduction). Here are some great belly-burners to aim to eat on a regular basis:

- ✓ **Apples:** This fruit is rich in the flavonoid quercetin, which has been shown to block baby fat cells from maturing. It's also a powerful inflammation fighter.
- ✓ **Cinnamon:** This spice has been found in studies to make fat cells more responsive to insulin, helping to better regulate blood sugar levels.
- ✓ **Ginger:** This spice has been found to have a thermogenic effect and to aid in digestion.
- ✓ **Green tea:** The main polyphenol, EGCG, in green tea has been shown to have thermogenic properties and to increase fat oxidation.
- ✓ **Hot peppers:** Rich in capsaicin, these peppers have a thermogenic effect on the body, boosting metabolism and calorie burn. These can be used fresh or in ground and flaked forms.
- ✓ **Red and purple grapes:** These fruits are rich in resveratrol. Studies have shown that this polyphenol helps increase metabolism and suppress estrogen production, which may help decrease body fat and increase muscle mass.
- ✓ **Soup:** Research has found that individuals who eat soup rather than solid foods consumed fewer overall calories throughout the day. Soup's high fluid volume may be the reason for this decreased consumption of calories. But watch out for the sodium content of canned soups. Homemade soup is best whenever possible. If you do choose a canned soup, make sure to select a low-sodium variety. And also watch your choice in soup; cream-based soups can be rich in saturated fat and high in calories. Choose mostly broth-based options, and if you do opt for a cream-based soup, make sure to select a lowfat option.

## Eating your way to a better metabolism

By making some simple changes to your eating habits and

behaviors, you can boost your metabolism (and, therefore, burn more calories every day). Here are a few easy changes you can make:

- ✓ **Eat!** Sounds easy enough, right? Who doesn't want to eat more? Studies have shown that eating smaller meals every three to four hours speeds up both metabolism and weight loss progress. When you wait too long between meals to eat, your body begins to wonder when the next meal is coming. So your body goes into a starvation mode of sorts; it stores fat in the rare chance that another meal never comes. This protective mechanism is useful in times of famine but not dieting.



Because of this fat-storing mechanism, those who drastically restrict their caloric intake generally don't lose much weight. So not only is it important to eat regularly, but you never want to cut your portions too dramatically (under 1,000–1,200 calories per day depending on age and height). Otherwise, you sabotage your weight loss efforts.

- ✓ **Ditch the simple sugars.** When you eat large amounts of sugar, your body produces more insulin. And the more insulin that's constantly being produced, the more fat your body stores. Consuming low-glycemic-index foods and avoiding refined carbohydrates helps to prevent an excessive production of insulin and, therefore, results in less fat storage.
- ✓ **Don't discount breakfast.** When you skip breakfast, you sabotage the rest of your day as well as your weight loss efforts. Studies show that people who eat a healthy breakfast weigh less than people who don't. When you eat breakfast, you're doing two things: jump-starting your metabolism and preventing excessive hunger later in the day. Your body doesn't begin to burn calories as effectively until you eat something. And remember that excessive hunger leads to cravings, which leads to overeating.

✓ **Drink plenty of water.** A German study found that drinking water can actually raise your metabolism. Increased fluid volume in the body may actually help to break down fat. And not drinking enough water can lead to dehydration, which can lower your metabolic rate. And at times, your brain can confuse thirst for hunger. So slight dehydration may increase your appetite and make it harder to resist the temptation to overeat. So on your Belly Fat Diet plan, drink at least 8 to 10 cups of water daily. If you can, drink your water chilled. Cold water may give your metabolism a small boost because some energy is required to heat the body.

## Part III

# Cooking Up Some Healthy and Tasty Recipes

### The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I thought a new place setting might help you lose some belly fat. It's a knife, a fork, and a BMI caliper."

## In this part . . .

Think losing weight and belly fat means giving up the foods you love or eating foods that are bland and boring? Think again! In this part, I provide you with delicious and easy-to-make recipes — fantastic, belly friendly alternatives to old favorites. I also show you just how

belly-friendly alternatives to old favorites. I also show you just how to stock and prepare your pantry and kitchen so you'll have belly-burning foods and seasonings on hand at all times.

# Chapter 11

## Planning and Stocking a Flat-Belly-Friendly Kitchen

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding how to read and evaluate a food label
  - ▶ Removing certain foods from your kitchen
  - ▶ Navigating the grocery store
  - ▶ Discovering belly-burning foods to stock up on
- 

Have you ever been at the grocery store and started picking up products to look at the labels and been left wondering what it all means? Have you spent hours wandering aimlessly through the store aisles wondering which foods are actually healthy and promote weight loss only to get so frustrated you give up and go home empty-handed? Well if so, you're not alone. Reading a food label can be like learning a new language. But don't despair! With these tips and hints, you'll be an expert at reading food labels in no time! And then you'll be able to fill your home with those foods that help you achieve a flatter belly.

In this chapter, I review the Nutrition Facts panel on food packaging and identify what components make a food a fat fighter. I also break through the mystery of the ingredient list and reveal which ingredients help to burn belly fat and which ingredients promote fat storage so you can work to avoid them. I also take a look inside your home pantry and refrigerator and identify foods that may be sabotaging your flat belly efforts. I show you simple solutions to get rid of these items and replace them with healthy, delicious alternatives your whole family will enjoy.





If you need help generating healthy grocery shopping lists, check out [dummies.com/go/bellyfat](http://dummies.com/go/bellyfat). There you'll find articles with great ideas for stocking both your fridge and pantry.

# Decoding the Food Label and Ingredient List

The mysterious food labels on packages of processed foods make many dieters feel anxious, confused, and defeated before they ever leave the grocery store. But not you. No, those feelings are all going to change today! Here I show you the ins and outs of the Nutrition Facts panel, including what to look at, what to ignore, and, most importantly, what to buy to help you achieve your flat belly goals. I start from the top and break the food label down section by section.

## Reading the Nutrition Facts panel

The food label is the window that looks into the food you're about to consume. It discloses everything from the suggested serving size to the good and bad ingredients contained in the food. After you understand exactly how to read a food label and what to look for, you'll be on your way to easily identifying whether a food is a belly buster or a belly flattener!

You can see an example of a typical Nutrition Facts panel in Figure 11-1.

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**Figure 11-1:**  
Nutrition  
Facts panel  
for a common  
snack food.

---

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 crackers (14g)	
Servings Per Container About 21	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 60	Calories from Fat 15
% Daily value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 70mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	3%
Dietary Fiber Less than 1g	3%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	Iron 2%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs	
Calories: 2,000 2,500	
Total Fat	Less than 65g 90g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2400mg 2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g



## Nutrition claims on packaging

Nutrition claims like “lowfat” and “high fiber” can be seen on all sorts of food product packaging throughout the grocery store. Today, government standards require a food to meet certain requirements before the distributors can boast claims on their packaging labels. Here are common claims seen on product packaging and what they really mean:

- ✓ **Calorie-free:** Fewer than 5 calories (per serving size)
- ✓ **Low calorie:** 40 calories or fewer (per serving size)
- ✓ **Lite or light (in calories):**  $\frac{1}{3}$  fewer calories than the original product
- ✓ **High fiber:** 5 grams of fiber or more per serving

- ✓ **Fat-free:** Less than 1/2 gram of fat per serving
- ✓ **Lowfat:** 3 grams of fat or less per serving
- ✓ **Lite or light (in fat):** 50 percent less fat than the original
- ✓ **Sodium-free:** Less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving
- ✓ **Very low sodium:** 35 milligrams or less of sodium per serving
- ✓ **Lite or light (in sodium):** 50 percent less sodium than the original product
- ✓ **Low sodium:** 140 milligrams or less of sodium per serving
- ✓ **Low cholesterol:** 20 milligrams or less of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat

Here's a breakdown of the most important parts of a Nutrition Facts panel:

- ✓ **Serving size:** Before you can determine whether a food will positively or negatively affect belly fat, you first need to find out how much of the particular food you can eat. This amount is referred to as the *serving size*. Looking at the serving size is important because the nutritional information (calories, fat, and sodium, for example) is based on that serving size. So if the serving size on the label is listed as 1/2 cup and you consume 1 cup of the food, you must double the calories and nutrients to determine how much you're truly taking in.
- ✓ **Calories:** In order to lose weight, including belly fat, you have to take in fewer calories than you burn each day. The weight loss meal plans in this book are based on a calorie range of 1,200–1,500 calories per day for women and 1,600–1,800 calories per day for men. When choosing a food, follow these guidelines to prevent yourself from taking in too many calories

per day: Keep snacks around 50–200 calories each and meals to 200–400 calories each.

- ✓ **Saturated and trans fats:** Both good fats and bad fats exist in diets today. Bad fats, which include saturated fats and trans fats, can increase inflammation in your body, promoting unwanted fat storage in the abdomen. The good fats include monounsaturated fats, some polyunsaturated fats, and omega-3 fatty acids. Monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to help blast belly fat. The Nutrition Facts panel only has to include saturated and trans fat, but occasionally it may also list monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats.



Regardless of the total fat grams listed, focus on the saturated and trans fats. You want to select a food with absolutely no trans fats and as few grams of saturated fat as possible. You want to keep your total intake of saturated fat per day to 15 grams or less.

- ✓ **Sodium:** Because sodium can trigger fluid retention, causing the stomach to look distended and bloated, you want to limit sodium intake for a flatter, firmer belly. The goal here is to keep your daily sodium intake to 2,000 milligrams or less per day. An easy trick for determining whether a food is high in sodium is to look at the “% Daily Value” column on the right-hand side of the food label. Aim to keep snack foods to 0–15 percent of your daily recommended sodium amount and meals to 25 percent or less to prevent exceeding your daily sodium allotment.
- ✓ **Fiber:** Fiber is a powerful nutrient and is a key component to reducing belly fat for two main reasons: It helps to decrease appetite and slows the insulin response. Try to consume at least 30 to 35 grams of total fiber per day with at least 8 grams coming from soluble fiber. When looking at the Nutrition Facts panel, aim to choose foods with at least 3 grams of fiber or

more per serving (for foods where fiber should naturally occur, such as in breads, pastas, and cereals).



When reviewing food labels for fiber, keep in mind that fiber occurs naturally in vegetables, fruit, and grains like cereals, breads, and pastas. Fiber occurs naturally in limited amounts or not at all in proteins, fats, and dairy products.

- ✓ **Sugar:** Foods high in sugar and low in fiber may cause a spike in insulin levels, resulting in increased fat storage in the abdomen as well as increased hunger and cravings. Aim to select foods with as little added sugar as possible. Use the rule of thumb of eating foods with only 10 grams of sugar or less per serving. To put this in perspective, just one chocolate chip cookie contains 10 grams of sugar!

## Avoiding unhealthy foods in the ingredient list

Did you know that the Nutrition Facts panel doesn't tell the whole story about whether a food is a healthy choice? You may have never realized this, but the Nutrition Facts panel can at times be misleading or even deceptive! It takes a bit more detective work to identify whether a food is truly a belly fat blaster or a belly buster in disguise. The good news is you can use the ingredient list on the food label to identify the truly healthy foods from the foods that are just marketed that way.

Here are the most common belly-busting ingredients that may be lurking in your food, along with some ways to identify and avoid them:

- ✓ **Trans fats:** If a food has less than half a gram of trans fat, it can be listed as having zero grams on the Nutrition Facts panel. If you eat multiple servings of a food with less than half a gram of trans fat, you may actually be eating multiple grams without

ever realizing it. Research has shown that having as little as 2 grams of trans fats per day can increase your risk of heart disease as well as increase the amount of belly fat you have. So you can see how dangerous this ingredient can be!

If you see the words “partially hydrogenated oil” in the ingredient list for a food, you know it contains a source of trans fats. Because even small amounts of trans fats can be damaging to both your health and your waistline, try to avoid all foods with partially hydrogenated oils.

- ✓ **Refined carbohydrates:** Foods with refined carbs can trigger a large insulin response (and therefore increased belly fat storage) even when they aren’t high in sugar. Refined carbohydrates, which are in grain products like breads, cereals, and pastas, have a majority of the outer grain removed (the part of the grain highest in fiber and nutrients). Because the outer grain is removed, these carbs are digested rapidly by the body and quickly increase blood sugar levels.

When choosing a grain product, not only do you want to look at the grams of fiber and sugar on the Nutrition Facts panel, but you also want to look at the ingredient list. A whole grain (for example, whole-wheat flour, brown rice flour, oat flour, or rye flour) should be listed as the first ingredient. If the first ingredient is enriched flour or white flour, the majority of the food is a refined grain, which can damage your belly-blasting efforts.

- ✓ **Added sugars:** The Nutrition Facts panel doesn’t differentiate between naturally occurring sugars, such as those in fruit, and added sugars, such as high-fructose corn syrup. Some foods with large amounts of added sugars can trigger a larger insulin response than foods that contain only naturally occurring sugars.

Be on the lookout for ingredients that indicate that sugar has been added to your food. These ingredients include high-fructose corn syrup, honey, dehydrated cane juice, malt syrup, maltodextrin, molasses, and any ingredient that contains “-ose” on the end.

ON THE END.

# Evaluating Your Kitchen and Chucking the Junk

After you're familiar with the basics of evaluating a food using the label and ingredient list (refer to the earlier section "Decoding the Food Label and Ingredient List"), you're ready to get down to business. Start by going through your kitchen. Check out the refrigerator, the pantry, and anywhere else you store food. Determine which foods are the best bet for your belly and which foods are belly busters. After you identify all the belly-busting choices currently in your house, get rid of them!

Some foods can be donated or given away to family and friends because they may be healthy and appropriate for other people even though they aren't ideal for someone on a Belly Fat Diet plan. However, other foods aren't good for anybody and should be pitched. In the following sections, I help you dive in and determine which foods should stay in your kitchen and which should go to a new home or in the trash.

## Determining which foods to donate or give away

As I'm sure you know from past experience, having a less-than-healthy food in the house is a sure bet in sabotaging your weight-loss efforts. You can say to yourself, "I'll put it in the back of the cabinet and forget about it," but you still know it's there. And in times of stress, extreme hunger, or even boredom, you may find yourself reaching for these belly busters that can blow all your efforts. So once and for all, you need to get rid of those foods!



When ridding your kitchen and pantry of these unhealthy foods, you can pitch the things that are half eaten, but if you come across fresh things that haven't been opened, consider donating or giving away these items to family and friends. These foods that aren't helping your weight loss and belly-flattening efforts may still be healthy for someone else. It would be wasteful to just toss these foods, especially when someone around you may benefit from them. These foods may be perfect for a growing child, for instance, and would make a wonderful donation to families in need.

Here are some of the less-than-friendly-to-your-belly foods to consider donating to a food pantry, shelter, or soup kitchen (or to family and friends who may be able to use them):

- ✓ **Canned vegetables:** These vegetables are still rich in many essential vitamins and minerals, but the high sodium content may be a belly-buster. If you must purchase canned vegetables for their convenience, pick up the ones that have no salt added (but don't be heavy handed with the salt shaker at the table!).
- ✓ **White rice/flavored rice/white pasta:** These products are a rich source of carbohydrates (energy) and are usually fortified with nutrients; however, because they're made with refined grains, they trigger an increased insulin response and should be avoided when you're on a Belly Fat Diet plan. Pre-flavored rice products are also high in sodium, which adds to the bloat.
- ✓ **Instant oatmeal:** Slow-cooked oatmeal, such as steel-cut oats or old-fashioned rolled oats, is higher in fiber, especially the cholesterol-lowering soluble fiber, than the fast cooking, instant varieties. So send the instant stuff packing.



Don't worry if you don't have time to prepare slow-cooked oatmeal in the morning. Here's an easy trick: Soak the



steel-cut or rolled oats in water the night before and then pop them in the microwave in the morning. They'll cook just as quickly as the instant and keep you full much longer.

- ✓ **Fruit juice:** A cup of 100 percent fruit juice contains just as many vitamins and minerals as whole fruit, but it lacks fiber. The simple sugars in juice may also trigger an increased insulin response. And if you have juice cocktails that aren't 100 percent fruit juice, you definitely need to remove them from your fridge. Because these contain added sugars, instead of just naturally occurring sugar, they're lower in nutrients and can cause a greater insulin response.
- ✓ **Carbonated beverages:** Carbonated drinks, including seltzer, club soda, and diet soda, contain no calories, but the increased gas production can be bloating, causing your belly to look and feel larger.
- ✓ **Low-fiber cereals:** In order to achieve the flat belly of your dreams, you want to avoid grains that are highly processed or low in fiber. Cereals with less than 5 grams of fiber per serving aren't appropriate for your belly-flattening plan. However, these may be just fine for a growing child who could benefit from a food fortified with nutrients. So definitely put those products in the donate box!
- ✓ **Canned meats:** Canned lean meats, such as tuna and shrimp, are great sources of omega-3 fatty acids, but they're high in sodium. And, of course, canned mystery meat is a big no-no because of its high fat and sodium content. Your best bet on the Belly Fat Diet plan is to choose fresh tuna or shrimp to reduce your sodium intake. If you do prefer canned options, just make sure to choose no-sodium-added varieties.
- ✓ **Canned soups:** Many canned soups are a great source of carbohydrates and protein, but the increased sodium content and refined grains can wreak havoc on your belly-flattening efforts. If you do opt for canned soup, choose a low-sodium or no-salt-added option made with whole grains like barley or

brown rice.

- ✓ **Butter:** Butter is very high in saturated fat, which may increase visceral fat in the abdomen. However, young children need saturated fat for brain development. So donate it to a shelter or pantry that caters to families with young children.
- ✓ **Vegetable oil:** On your Belly Fat Diet plan, you want to focus on consuming healthy, belly-flattening fat sources like olive oil. Replacing vegetable oil with an oil rich in monounsaturated fats is a better choice.
- ✓ **High-fat dairy products (whole milk, full-fat cheese, and full-fat yogurts):** Because these items are high in saturated fat, they aren't appropriate for belly flattening. However, they are healthy options for young children who still need a good source of saturated fat in their diet on a daily basis. So be sure to pass them on.

## Deciding what foods to toss

Some foods just aren't healthy for anyone to consume. Donating these foods to a shelter or pantry wouldn't be as appropriate, because consuming these foods on a regular basis can have detrimental side effects for anyone, regardless of age or size. It's best to take the following foods and throw them away once and for all:

- ✓ **Snack foods containing partially hydrogenated oils:** If a food contains partially hydrogenated oils in its ingredient list, it contains a source of trans fats. Because even 2 grams of trans fat can have a negative impact on health, toss foods containing these. You see these oils in everything from crackers and sweets to margarines and convenience foods, so make sure to carefully read the ingredient list.
- ✓ **Processed, high-fat meats:** Meats that are highly processed and high in fat, such as sausages or hot dogs, contain not only saturated fat but also a significant amount of nitrates, which

are a known carcinogen. Unless you have processed meats that are labeled nitrate-free, I would recommend tossing these products.

- ✓ **Pre-fried frozen foods:** Pre-fried frozen foods like french fries and mozzarella sticks are typically high in saturated fat, refined starches, and sodium. Many times, these foods also contain a large amount of preservatives and trans fats. Check the ingredient list carefully, and if you see partially hydrogenated oils, toss 'em.
- ✓ **Candy:** Candy is typically pure sugar or sugar and fat combined. Because it has little or no nutritional value, toss it.
- ✓ **Soda:** Soda is just liquid sugar. It causes a very high insulin response and provides absolutely no nutritional value. Pitch it!

## Shopping for Belly-Friendly Foods

After you've cleaned house and removed all the foods that could potentially hurt your belly-busting efforts, you can stock your house with all the belly-friendly foods that keep you on track and help you successfully reach your flat belly goals.

Before you run out to the grocery store, consider a few things first. Ask yourself these questions:

- ✓ **What are the foods I absolutely can't live without?** If you crave certain foods all the time, ask yourself whether these foods are those that promote belly fat or help to shrink it. If they shrink belly fat, plan to stock up on them. However, if the foods promote the storage of belly fat, don't panic! Later I help you come up with healthy alternatives to these foods so you can enjoy them more often.
- ✓ **Are there certain foods that my family loves to have on hand?** Chances are your family has its favorites, whether it's chips, ice cream, or pickles. If these tempting foods sabotage your belly-flattening efforts, don't despair. Later I help you

come up with healthy alternatives to these as well.

- ✓ **Which of the belly-flattening foods that I discuss in Chapter 6 and later in this chapter are your favorites?** Keep these foods in mind as you start to build your belly-flattening shopping list.

## Making your list by food group

A shopping list is a must. If you want to lose weight and flatten your belly, you can't go shopping unprepared (or hungry). Shopping without a list is like trying to write a check when your account balance is zero — it's not a good idea, and it can get you into a lot of trouble! Creating a shopping list helps you to stay organized in the store, buy just what you need, avoid tempting foods you don't need, and prevent the frustrating feeling of realizing you forgot an important food item when you're already home.

When making your list, first plan out the meals and snacks you and your family will eat during the week. This way, you know exactly what ingredients and what foods you need to put on your list. (For instance, you can follow the advice and meal plans in Chapters 7 and 8.)

I find the easiest way to create a shopping list is to go by food groups. Doing so helps prevent you from forgetting any essential foods, and it also helps ensure you're buying a good balance of foods. The following sections break up the foods into groups for you.

### Vegetables

You want to stock up on both fresh and frozen varieties. Select a good variety by aiming to pick vegetables from every color of the rainbow to maximize your nutrient intake.



If choosing frozen vegetables, select plain frozen vegetables,

not the ones with seasonings and sauces (unless the total fat is less than 2 grams per serving and the sodium is less than 140 milligrams per serving).

Organic is the best choice when buying produce, but if you have to pick and choose to fit your budget, try to always purchase organic varieties for at least the following vegetables, because they tend to be the “dirtiest”:

- ✓ Bell peppers
- ✓ Celery
- ✓ Lettuce
- ✓ Spinach

## **Fruit**

Selecting fresh and frozen varieties of fruit is a great idea. I especially love frozen berries because they last longer, have just as much nutrition, and are great for adding to recipes and smoothies. Canned fruit can also be a great choice — if you’re careful. Avoid fruit canned in syrup. Instead, choose fruit canned in 100% fruit juice.



Watch out for dried fruit. If selecting dried fruit, monitor the ingredients carefully and select the ones whose ingredients are mainly fruit and not added sugars and colorings.

Just like with vegetables, organic is best, but if you have to pick and choose what organic produce you buy, choose the following, which are the “dirty” fruits:

- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Cherries
- ✓ Grapes (imported)

- ✓ Nectarines
- ✓ Peaches
- ✓ Pears
- ✓ Strawberries

## Milk and yogurt

Dairy products are good for you because they provide calcium and protein. However, you do have to be choosy. Here are the general guidelines to follow:

- ✓ **Milk:** Select any variety of fat-free (skim) or lowfat (1%) milk, such as cow's milk, soy milk, or almond milk. If you choose soy or almond milk, avoid the flavored milks that have sugar or corn syrup as one of the first five ingredients. When choosing cow's milk, opt for organic milk that's free of hormones and antibiotics.
- ✓ **Yogurt:** When selecting yogurt, avoid options with added sugar. Because yogurt has naturally occurring sugar as well, it's more important to focus on the ingredient list rather than the grams of sugar on the label. Avoid options where sugar and corn syrup are in the first five ingredients. Choose yogurts that are fat-free or lowfat (3 grams of total fat or less per 6-ounce serving).

## Starches

When choosing any type of starch, which includes foods like bread, cereal, and pasta, select only whole-grain varieties. Before purchasing, always look at the first ingredient and make sure it lists a whole grain, such as whole wheat, rye, or bran. Avoid starches with more than 10 grams of sugar or less than 3 grams of fiber per serving. Be adventurous and try some new grains you may not have had before, such as quinoa. It's high in protein and fiber, so it keeps you quite satisfied for a long time.

## Proteins

The leaner the protein, the leaner your belly. Make sure to select lean protein options, such as fish, white-meat poultry, pork tenderloin, and vegetarian-based proteins like edamame and tofu. Don't forget to pick up some whole eggs and liquid egg whites; both are great in recipes, and hard-boiled eggs make a fine snack. If you purchase cheese, make sure to select lowfat varieties with 3 grams of fat or less per ounce. Aim to have fish at least twice a week, because the omega-3 fatty acids can be powerful belly fighters.

## Fats

Fats aren't all bad. Some are good for you! You want to stock up on those good belly-blasting monounsaturated fats, including healthy oils (like olive oil) and nuts (especially almonds, walnuts, and pistachios). Pick up some natural almond or peanut butter for a delicious belly-friendly treat. Seeds, such as sunflower seeds, make a great snack option and are full of healthy fats. You can also venture a bit outside the box and try some fat sources that are great for your belly and that you may not have had before, such as chia seeds. They're rich in belly-flattening omega-3 fatty acids.

## Snacks

You didn't think I would tell you to leave the store without snacks, did you? Of course not! Snacking is essential to your belly-flattening plan. Many of the foods already on your list, such as raw vegetables, fresh fruit, nuts, and hard-boiled eggs make great snack options, but you may want to have more options on hand.



Foods from any food group can be snacks, so use the preceding guidelines for each food group when choosing snack options. For instance, if you choose a starchy snack, make sure it's made with whole grains and contains at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

Popcorn is my favorite belly-flattening snack, especially because you can have so much of it! Buy the loose kernels instead of the packaged microwave varieties to help reduce your sodium intake. Use an air-popper or my easy popcorn recipe in Chapter 15 for a salt-free and fat-free snack. If you do choose microwave popcorn, opt for only lowfat and low-sodium options.

If you're looking for something sweet, pick up some dark chocolate. That's right! I am telling you to buy chocolate! Why? Because cocoa has been found to increase blood flow in the arteries, which may in turn help decrease blood pressure and lower the risk of blood clots. But make sure it contains at least 70 percent cocoa, and limit it to no more than one ounce per day.

## **Beverages**

Water is the best beverage choice on your Belly Fat Diet plan. However, if you're looking for something with more flavor, you have options. For instance, skip the soda aisle all together, and pick up some green tea. Its belly-fighting ingredients, such as the compound epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), make green tea a delicious and slimming drink. And you can drink it hot or cold.

If you really miss soda, you can pick up some naturally flavored seltzer, but try to limit it to 12 ounces per day or less, because carbonation can be bloating to your belly. And, although water and naturally flavored beverages, such as tea, are the best choice, artificially sweetened, calorie-free beverages are also acceptable for your Belly Fat Diet plan.

## **The best belly-fighting foods for your pantry**

The pantry is a great place to stock up on nonperishables with belly-flattening benefits. Start stocking up on the following foods so you can stay on track with your weight-loss plan at all times:



- ✓ **Steel-cut oats:** Loaded with heart-healthy soluble fiber, this great breakfast option helps keep you feeling full and satisfied without bloating your belly. Old-fashioned rolled oats are also a good option here as well.
- ✓ **Whole grains (whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, and quinoa, for example):** These high-fiber options provide a great taste without the belly-bloating side effects of refined grains. A study by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that dieters who ate five servings of whole grains every day for 12 weeks lost two times as much belly fat as people who ate refined carbohydrates instead. How's that for motivation?
- ✓ **Green tea:** Catechins in green tea help your body burn fat more effectively, thus flattening your belly one cup at a time.



Select green tea that you brew yourself. Premade green tea, such as bottled iced green tea, is often high in sugar and contains less of the belly-fighting compound EGCG.

- ✓ **Almonds or almond butter:** A terrific source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, almonds were found in a study to help reduce insulin resistance and lower unhealthy LDL cholesterol levels. Raw almonds make a great snack, and almond butter can be smeared on whole-grain toast or celery sticks for a mini meal.
- ✓ **Beans and lentils:** Beans are great for you because they're rich in filling fiber and protein.



Look into stocking up on cannellini beans. These beans contain one of the highest levels of *resistance starch*, which is a fiber that resists digestion. This high level of resistance starch means your body has to work harder to digest it, and, in turn, burn more calories, which helps promote weight loss.

- ✓ **Olive oil:** You want to transition from cooking with fats high in

unhealthy, saturated fat, such as butter, and instead use oils with a high level of heart-healthy and belly-flattening monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil. Peanut oil, grapeseed oil, and canola oil are also rich sources of monounsaturated fats.

- ✓ **Apple cider vinegar:** Try adding a small amount of apple cider vinegar to some recipes or even to a drink. Why? A study out of Japan found overweight individuals who consumed a drink with 1–2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar daily for 12 weeks lost more body weight and visceral fat, helping to decrease waist circumference and body mass index (BMI).

## Navigating the store

You have your list and are ready to start shopping. But first, make sure you know the simple tricks that can help you make the healthiest choices while you're at the grocery store. Consider the following:

- ✓ **Don't go grocery shopping hungry.** When you're hungry, *everything* looks good, especially the foods that can expand your belly. So you'll more than likely come home with way more food than you planned to buy and very likely with many more unhealthy choices. Your best bet is to ward off hunger, cravings, and temptation by having a snack before heading to the store.
- ✓ **Shop the perimeter.** The perimeter of the store is where you find fresh vegetables and fruit, lean proteins like fish and chicken breast, and yogurt, milk, and eggs. Belly expanders, such as cookies, cakes, and chips, reside in the center aisles, so skip these if you can.
- ✓ **Don't forget to read the labels while you're in the store.** You may have written whole-wheat bread on your shopping list, but make sure when you go to purchase it, it's truly whole grain and not just enriched wheat flour or loaded with added sugars like high-fructose corn syrup. Flip the bread over, look at the

label, and make sure the first ingredient is whole-wheat flour. Also, watch out for overly processed foods that seem healthy. Aim to select foods with five ingredients or less. At the very least, select foods that only contain ingredients you can pronounce and recognize.

## Chapter 12

# Waking Up to Healthy Breakfast Options

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### ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Understanding breakfast's role in weight loss and metabolism
  - ▶ Identifying delicious and easy breakfast options to fight belly fat
- 

### ***Recipes in This Chapter***

- 🕒 Breadless Breakfast Quiche
- 🕒 Tropical Yogurt Parfait
- 🕒 Waistline-Slimming Omelet
- 🕒 Banana-Almond Breakfast Toast
- ▶ On-the-Go Breakfast Sandwich
- 🕒 Belly-Blasting Berry Smoothie
- 🕒 Cinnamon Oatmeal with Almonds
- 🕒 90-Second Omelet
- ▶ Bean, Ham, and Cheese Breakfast Burrito
- 🕒 Veggie-Egg Muffins
- 🕒 Quick and Belly-Friendly Cold Cereal with Fruit



If you want to make a huge impact on fighting belly fat, you have to start first thing in the morning. Breakfast is truly the most essential meal of the day. After all, it boosts your metabolism and helps you make better food choices throughout the day. However, to many people, breakfast is no more than an afterthought as they're running out the door. If you're serious about banishing belly fat for good

out the door. If you're serious about burning belly fat for good, you have to get started as soon as you wake up.

Luckily, breakfast doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. In this chapter, I show you the importance of breakfast and provide you with easy-to-make recipes that you can enjoy. I even show you what recipes you can make in advance, freeze, and pop in the microwave for a super-fast breakfast solution.

## Revving Your Engine with a Tasty and Nutritious Breakfast

Your body is similar to a car: If you don't put gas into it, you can't expect it to go anywhere. As you sleep overnight, your body hasn't received any "fuel" (food) for a long period of time. Depending on how long you sleep and when your last meal was, this period of time can be anywhere from 8 to 12 hours or more.



During this extended period of time, your body relies on stored energy in your cells for fuel. To protect you from running out of stored energy, your body also slows down your energy needs by slightly slowing your metabolic rate. This process puts your body in a fasting state. So if you wake up, start your day, and don't fuel your body with food, your body continues to stay in that fasting state. Because your metabolic rate is slightly slowed during a state of fasting, you won't burn as many calories throughout the morning. And burning fewer calories means you have to eat even less or exercise even more during the rest of the day to help promote weight loss. I doubt you want to do that! Instead, you want to rev up your metabolism so you burn more calories every minute of every day, helping to quickly (and permanently) burn away unwanted fat and pounds.

So to avoid slowing down your metabolism and making weight loss more difficult, you only have to do one simple thing: Eat! And who

doesn't want to eat? I know I do! You should eat breakfast within an hour of waking up. Keep in mind, however, that you don't have to eat an elaborate breakfast. You just need a small amount of belly-friendly food in your system to break the fasting state.

## **“But I’m not hungry in the morning . . .”**

I know what all of you non-breakfast-eaters are saying right now: “I’m just not hungry in the morning. But when I do eat breakfast, my appetite increases, and I feel hungry all morning.” If this happens to you, I understand why you would be hesitant to start eating breakfast, especially if you feel you’re going to start feeling hungrier and eating more all day long.

But get this: What’s really happening here is that when your body is in that prolonged fasting state, all of your body systems slow down. Your body — which can’t tell whether you’re purposefully fasting or whether the grocery store ran out of food due to a mass famine — decreases hunger signals in the body to protect you. When you do start eating, the fasting stage is over, metabolism is increased, and your body goes back to normal functioning, including normal hunger and satiety signals.



Because you aren't used to eating breakfast, feeling these hunger signals in the morning may seem new to you, and it will seem as though having eaten breakfast is what made you feel hungry. In reality, however, you became hungry because your metabolism revved up, which is a good thing. If you begin eating breakfast on a regular basis, for at least a week or two, this hunger after eating will start to subside.

## **Why breakfast affects your choices throughout the day**

Breakfast helps you make better meal choices throughout the day

and allows you to better control your portions, promoting weight loss. If you skip breakfast entirely, you don't feel hungry because your body is in the fasting state I discuss earlier in the chapter. However, your body can go only so long suppressing hunger cues. So at some point you start feeling hungry. But maybe you're at work or rushing around taking care of the kids and you ignore this hunger signal. The signal gets stronger and stronger, and eventually you can't ignore it anymore. Now you're ravenous and ready to devour anything and everything you can find.

As you probably know, when you get really hungry, you aren't exactly looking for the healthiest food choices. You grab whatever is the easiest and quickest — maybe a bag of chips or a burger from a fast-food joint — and you end up eating too much of it and way too fast. This cycle of eating can promote weight gain rather than weight loss. And what's worse is that not only did you just eat too many calories, but your body was also already burning fewer calories because you skipped breakfast. You just set yourself up for a double whammy that fuels weight gain and belly fat storage.

To prevent this cycle from happening, you need to eat a healthy, filling breakfast. But you also need a breakfast that is realistic and works for your lifestyle. If you have time in the morning to make an elaborate breakfast, that's terrific! But if you're like many people who just need to grab something as you run out the door, there's still hope. This chapter provides some excellent options. You can even prepare some of them on a day when you have more time and then refrigerate or freeze them so you can simply reheat for a super-fast breakfast on those busy days.

## 🍳 ***Breadless Breakfast Quiche***

**Prep time:** 10 min • **Cook time:** 30 min • **Yield:** 4 servings

### **Ingredients**

*Nonstick cooking spray*

*2 cups fresh spinach*

*1 cup chopped mushrooms*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*4 eggs*

*1 cup liquid egg whites (or 8 egg whites)*

*1/2 cup fresh or no-salt-added canned diced tomatoes*

*1/2 cup part-skim feta cheese*

### **Directions**

- 1** Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and spray a 10-x-10-inch glass baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2** In a large sauté pan, sauté the spinach and mushrooms in the olive oil until tender.
- 3** Beat the whole eggs along with the liquid egg whites. Pour half the egg mixture into the prepared baking pan.
- 4** Evenly spread the spinach and mushroom mixture on top of the egg mixture and then top with the diced tomatoes. Sprinkle the feta cheese on top of the tomatoes.
- 5** Pour the remaining egg mixture on top, covering the cheese and vegetables.
- 6** Place the baking pan in the oven and cook for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean.

***Meal plan servings:*** 1 vegetable, 2 ounces protein, 1 fat.

***Per serving:*** Calories 172 (From Fat 90); Fat 10g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 188mg; Sodium 369mg; Carbohydrate 5g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 16g.

***Tip:*** I recommend you make this recipe on the weekend (or your day off work), refrigerate it, and then just slice a serving and microwave it for a quick breakfast any day. This recipe can stay in the fridge for up to 3–4 days.





## 🍌 ***Tropical Yogurt Parfait***

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Yield:** 1 serving

### **Ingredients**

1 cup fat-free plain or vanilla Greek yogurt

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

1 cup chopped papaya

### **Directions**

**1** Place 1/4 cup of the yogurt in a clear glass. Top with 1 tablespoon of chopped walnuts and 1/4 cup papaya.

**2** Repeat in layers to make an attractive and tasty parfait.

**Meal plan servings:** 1 milk, 1 fruit, 2 fats.

**Per serving:** Calories 371 (From Fat 178); Fat 20g (Saturated 2g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 90mg; Carbohydrate 27g (Dietary Fiber 5g); Protein 25g.



## 🍌 ***Waistline-Slimming Omelet***

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 10 min • **Yield:** 1 serving

### **Ingredients**

Nonstick cooking spray

1/4 cup chopped onion

1/4 cup chopped chili peppers (canned or fresh)

1 egg

1/4 cup liquid egg whites (or 2 egg whites)

1/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

### **Directions**

- 1** Spray a large sauté pan with nonstick cooking spray and sauté the onions and chili peppers until tender. Remove from the pan and keep warm. (If you prefer crunchy vegetables, leave the onions and peppers uncooked.)
- 2** Spray the pan with nonstick cooking spray again and place over medium heat.
- 3** Whisk together the whole egg and the liquid egg whites (or egg whites). Add the egg mixture to the prepared sauté pan.
- 4** Allow the eggs to slightly firm, and then top with the onions, peppers, and grated cheese.
- 5** Gently fold over the egg to create an omelet. Flip once to allow for even cooking.

**Meal plan servings:** 1 vegetable, 3 ounces protein, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 226 (From Fat 100); Fat 11g (Saturated 5g); Cholesterol 198mg; Sodium 548mg; Carbohydrate 8g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 23g.



## ***Banana-Almond Breakfast Toast***

**Prep time:** 10 min • **Cook time:** 10 min • **Yield:** 2 servings

### **Ingredients**

*1/2 cup liquid egg substitute (or 4 egg whites)*

*1 tablespoon vanilla extract*

*3 tablespoons ground cinnamon*

*1/4 cup crushed almonds*

*Nonstick cooking spray*

*2 slices 100% whole-wheat bread*

*1 large banana, sliced*

### **Directions**

- 1** Place the liquid egg substitute (or egg whites) in a large bowl. Add the vanilla extract and 2 tablespoons of the cinnamon and whisk together. On a plate, spread out the crushed almonds.
- 2** Spray a small sauté pan with nonstick cooking spray and place over medium heat.
- 3** Dip one slice of bread into the egg mixture until fully coated. Remove the bread from the egg mixture and dip it into the crushed almonds, flipping to evenly coat both sides.
- 4** Place the bread in the prepared sauté pan and allow to cook for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, or until the egg mixture firms and no liquid is present.
- 5** Remove the toast from the pan and place it on a clean plate. Repeat Steps 1–4 with the second slice of bread.
- 6** Top each piece of toast with sliced banana and then sprinkle with the remaining cinnamon.

***Meal plan servings:*** 1 starch, 1 ounce protein, 1 fruit, 1 fat.

***Per serving:*** Calories 289 (From Fat 71); Fat 8g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 261mg; Carbohydrate 41g (Dietary Fiber 11g); Protein 13g.



## ***On-the-Go Breakfast Sandwich***

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 5 min • **Yield:** 1 serving

### **Ingredients**

*Nonstick cooking spray*

*1 egg (or ¼ cup liquid egg whites)*

*2 slices 100% whole-grain bread*

*1 ounce Canadian bacon*

*1 ounce part-skim provolone cheese*

## **Directions**

- 1** Spray a small sauté pan with nonstick cooking spray and place over medium heat. Add the egg (or liquid egg whites) to the pan.
- 2** Allow the egg to firm in one solid piece as you would when making an omelet, making sure the egg maintains the size of a bread slice. Flip the egg once to ensure adequate cooking.
- 3** Once firm, remove the egg from the heat. Place the cooked egg on top of one slice of bread. Top with Canadian bacon and cheese, and then cover with the other slice of bread to create a sandwich.

***Meal plan servings:*** 2 starches, 3 ounces protein.

***Per serving:*** Calories 322 (From Fat 128); Fat 14g (Saturated 6g); Cholesterol 211mg; Sodium 885mg; Carbohydrate 25g (Dietary Fiber 3g); Protein 25g.

***Tip:*** This sandwich can be frozen and reheated for 30 to 45 seconds in your microwave for a quick and easy breakfast option.

***Vary It!*** Try adding belly-flattening veggies, such as cooked spinach, tomato, or peppers, to your egg sandwich for an added benefit.



## **Belly-Blasting Berry Smoothie**

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Yield:** 1 serving

### **Ingredients**

*1 cup fat-free plain Greek yogurt*

*1 cup frozen organic berries (blueberries, strawberries, or açai berries make great choices)*

*1 tablespoon vanilla extract*

*1 tablespoon ground chia seeds*

*1/2 cup ice*

### **Directions**

**1** In a blender, combine the yogurt, berries, vanilla, ground chia seeds, and ice.

**2** Blend on high for 1 minute, or until desired consistency is reached.

**Meal plan servings:** 1 milk, 1 fruit, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 294 (From Fat 42); Fat 5g (Saturated 2g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 92mg; Carbohydrate 35g (Dietary Fiber 8g); Protein 23g.

**Tip:** Ground chia seeds can be found in many grocery stores in the organic/health food sections as well as in most natural food stores. If you can't find chia seeds, you can substitute with the same amount of ground flaxseed.



## 🍌 Cinnamon Oatmeal with Almonds

**Prep time:** 2 min • **Cook time:** 35 min • **Yield:** 4 servings

### Ingredients

3 cups water

1 cup steel-cut oats

2 tablespoons cinnamon

1/4 cup chopped almonds

1 teaspoon stevia extract or zero-calorie artificial sweetener (optional)

### Directions

**1** Place the water in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat.

**2** Stir in the oats and allow the mixture to come back to a boil.

**3** When the oatmeal reaches a boil, cover and reduce the heat to medium-low. Let it simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the oats reach desired consistency, stirring occasionally.

**4** Sprinkle cinnamon and almonds on top, and add stevia or zero-

calorie artificial sweetener, if desired.

**Meal plan servings:** 1 starch, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 140 (From Fat 45); Fat 5g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 3mg; Carbohydrate 21g (Dietary Fiber 4g); Protein 5g.

**Tip:** When cooking oatmeal, shorter cooking time leads to chewier oats and longer time leads to softer oats.



## 🍳 90-Second Omelet

**Prep time:** 1 min • **Cook time:** 1½ min • **Yield:** 1 serving

### Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray

2 eggs (or ½ cup liquid egg substitute), whisked

½ cup cooked broccoli

¼ cup shredded part-skim cheddar cheese

### Directions

- 1** Spray a 12-ounce coffee mug with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2** Pour half of the whisked egg into the prepared mug, and then add the broccoli and cheese. Pour the remaining egg on top.
- 3** Microwave for 90 seconds, or until firm, and remove.

**Meal plan servings:** 3 ounces protein, 1 vegetable, 2 fats.

**Per serving:** Calories 239 (From Fat 145); Fat 16g (Saturated 7g); Cholesterol 385mg; Sodium 137mg; Carbohydrate 4g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 21g.

**Vary It!** You can add any cooked vegetables you like to this one-cup omelet. Try onion, red pepper, mushrooms, or tomatoes (or a mix!). Steaming is the best option for cooking the veggies, but if you're short on time, using flash-frozen and microwaving is fine as well.



## ***Bean, Ham, and Cheese Breakfast Burrito***

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 5 min • **Yield:** 4 servings

### **Ingredients**

*Nonstick cooking spray*

*4 eggs (or 1 cup liquid egg whites)*

*4 ounces chopped lean ham*

*2 cups cooked cannellini beans (or one 16-ounce can, rinsed and drained)*

*Four 6-inch 100% whole-grain tortillas*

*4 ounces shredded part-skim cheddar cheese*

### **Directions**

- 1** Spray a sauté pan with nonstick cooking spray and place over medium heat.
- 2** In a small bowl, whisk the eggs (or egg whites). Add to the prepared pan along with the ham and beans.
- 3** Stir the mixture occasionally until the eggs are fully cooked and scrambled.
- 4** Place  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the mixture onto each tortilla and top with 1 ounce of the shredded cheese.
- 5** Wrap the tortilla into a burrito shape and allow the cheese to melt.

***Meal plan servings:*** 2 starches, 4 ounces protein, 1 fat.

***Per serving:*** Calories 389 (From Fat 118); Fat 13g (Saturated 6g); Cholesterol 217mg; Sodium 445mg; Carbohydrate 45g (Dietary Fiber 8g); Protein 30g.

***Tip:*** If selecting canned beans, aim to choose no-sodium-added or low-sodium options whenever possible.

***Vary It!*** You can personalize this burrito by adding some cooked vegetables, such as green pepper and onion, and by using different kinds of cheese and beans. Experiment with black beans, pinto beans, lowfat hot pepper cheese, or lowfat Monterey Jack, for example.



## 🥦 Veggie-Egg Muffins

**Prep time:** 10 min • **Cook time:** 15–20 min • **Yield:** 8 servings

### Ingredients

*Nonstick cooking spray*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*4 eggs*

*1 cup liquid egg whites (or 8 egg whites)*

*¾ cup broccoli, chopped*

*1 cup grated fresh mozzarella cheese*

*¾ cup mushroom, diced*

*1 cup onion, chopped*

*½ cup tomato, diced*

*¾ cup crumbled part-skim feta cheese*

*½ cup spinach, chopped*

*¾ cup bell pepper, chopped*

### Directions

- 1** Preheat the oven to 375 degrees, and then spray an 8-count muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.
- 2** In a sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Cook each of the vegetables separately in the oil until they're tender.
- 3** Meanwhile, in a bowl, whisk together the whole eggs and the liquid



egg whites. Pour  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the egg mixture into each muffin cup.

**4** Add in one of the following varieties of vegetables and cheese to each muffin cup to make a variety of muffins:

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup broccoli and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mozzarella cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup mushroom,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onion, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mozzarella cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup tomato,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onion, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup feta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup spinach,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mushroom, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup feta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup bell pepper,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mushroom, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onion

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup tomato,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup spinach, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mozzarella cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup broccoli,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onion, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup feta cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup bell pepper and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mozzarella cheese

**5** Place the muffin tin in the oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Meal plan servings:** 2 ounces protein, 0.5 vegetable.

**Per serving:** Calories 125 (From Fat 68); Fat 8g (Saturated 4g); Cholesterol 106mg; Sodium 281mg; Carbohydrate 2g (Dietary Fiber 0g); Protein 13g.

**Vary It:** The vegetables listed here are just a starting point. You can get creative by substituting with different vegetables, different varieties of lowfat cheese, and even lean proteins such as low-sodium ham or turkey bacon.



## ◉ **Quick and Belly-Friendly Cold Cereal with Fruit**

**Prep time:** 1 min • **Yield:** 1 serving

## **Ingredients**

*1 cup whole-grain cereal*

*1 cup fat-free or 1% milk (or substitute with almond or soy milk)*

*1/2 cup grapefruit*

## **Directions**

**1** Pour the cereal in a small bowl and top with milk.

**2** Serve along with 1/2 cup of grapefruit on the side.

**Note:** *You probably don't need a recipe for cereal, but I wanted to make the point that it is a viable and quick option for breakfast. You're better off throwing together some whole-grain cereal and milk than skipping the meal altogether. If you think cold cereal is boring, make it more exciting with your favorite fruit.*

**Meal plan servings:** 2 starches, 1 milk, 1 fruit.

**Per serving:** Calories 238 (From Fat 20); Fat 2g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 5mg; Sodium 385mg; Carbohydrate 69g (Dietary Fiber 10g); Protein 14g.

## **Making cereal a healthy breakfast option**

Cereal can make a quick and filling breakfast option when even the quickest of the recipes I provide you earlier in this chapter isn't quick enough. I realize that most of you aren't going to make your own cereal; you're going to go to the grocery store and buy a box. You have to be careful about what cereal you select, however. You want to use these guidelines:

- ✓ The first ingredient of the cereal needs to be a whole grain (for example, whole wheat, oat bran, or brown rice).
- ✓ The cereal should contain at least 5 grams of fiber per 1/2 cup serving.
- ✓ The cereal should contain 110 calories or less per 1/2 cup serving.

Make sure to use a fat-free or lowfat dairy-based milk for your cereal. If you select a nondairy option, such as soy or almond milk, make sure it contains 10 grams of sugar or less per 1 cup serving.

grams of sugar or less per 1 cup serving.

## Chapter 13

# Whipping Up Lunches That Fight Belly Fat

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### *In This Chapter*

► Understanding the importance of eating lunch ► Preparing tasty lunch options that help you slim your tummy Recipes in This Chapter

► Grilled Chicken Salad ◉ Hot and Spicy Vegetarian Chili ◉ Black Bean Quesadilla ► Quick and Easy Turkey Wrap ► Tuna and Salsa Stuffed Pepper ◉ Tortilla Pizza ◉ Shockingly Healthy (and Easy!) Calzone ► Turkey Burger with Sweet Potato Fries ◉ Belly-Beating Bean Burrito ◉ Hummus and Avocado Sandwich 🍴🥗🥙🍌🍷

The key to losing weight and keeping it off is to eat regularly throughout the day. Doing so not only helps boost your metabolism, but it also helps control your appetite. When you get too hungry, it can be difficult to ward off the temptation to overeat or fight cravings for foods that are less than friendly to your belly. That's why lunch is so critical to your success with the Belly Fat Diet plan. If you skip lunch, you set yourself up for mid-afternoon fatigue, cravings, and overeating at dinner and later on in the evening.

I know lunch can be hard to fit in at times. Maybe you were rushing out to work in the morning and didn't have time to pack anything. Or maybe you were so busy caring for the kids that you didn't have a chance to make lunch for yourself. So that you don't stop at the nearest fast-food joint to pick up a sandwich that will pack fat on your belly, I show you some quick (and really tasty!) lunches you can make in a hurry. I also point out my favorite belly-blasting lunches that are nice to make in advance. You can make these lunches in bulk on a day when you have some free time, and then

you can freeze them and reheat them for a super-fast lunch anytime.

This chapter shows you that you have no excuse to not have a healthy lunch every day. And after you taste the recipes, you'll look forward to lunch so much that you won't be able to skip it!

## Preparing Belly-Shrinking Lunches

Not just any old meal will do for lunch. You want to make sure you take time at lunch to make it a belly-burning opportunity. So throughout the recipes in this chapter, you see some key ingredients that help you burn belly fat. These include ingredients like avocado, apple cider vinegar, and cannellini beans. Research has shown that these ingredients help you more effectively burn fat (see Chapter 11 for a detailed explanation on why). And the best part? They also taste great, which is a real win-win for your belly and your taste buds!

Do you have a typical lunch staple? What's your go-to meal on a busy day? Is it a healthy choice? Is it rich in belly-blasting ingredients, such as monounsaturated fats, omega-3 fatty acids, and antioxidants? Or is it a belly-bloater rich in refined grains, saturated fat, and sodium? If your typical lunch is more of a belly-bloater than a belly-burner, the good news is that it just takes a few simple changes to revamp it to a belly-friendly meal. Consider the following examples: ✓ If your typical lunch contains white bread, Italian bread, or a white-flour wrap, simply switch to a 100 percent whole-grain alternative, such as a 100 percent whole-wheat wrap or 100 percent rye bread.

✓ If your normal lunch contains a high amount of saturated fats from lunch meats like liverwurst and salami or full-fat cheese, try switching to low-fat, reduced-sodium ham or turkey breast and opt for reduced-fat cheese made with 1 percent milk instead.

✓ Is your lunch lacking in antioxidant rich foods? No problem!

Add slices of fresh tomato, onion, or roasted red peppers on top of your sandwich. Have a side of fresh berries or a side salad with your meal. Or switch from mayonnaise to hummus as a spread on your wrap.

- ✓ If you eat out for lunch, your meal may be packed full of sodium, refined carbohydrates, and unhealthy fats without you even realizing it. Make sure to visit Chapter 17 for healthy lunch alternatives when eating out at any restaurant or fast-food establishment.

As you can see, just a few simple adjustments can take almost any meal from a belly-bloater to a belly-blaster! Throughout this chapter, I show you how to transform some typical lunches into powerful belly fat fighters. I also introduce you to some quick and easy lunch options you may have never even considered (but will love!).

## ***Grilled Chicken Salad***

**Prep time:** 35–40 min • **Cook time:** 15–20 min • **Yield:** 4 servings

### ***Ingredients***

*1/2 cup apple cider vinegar, divided 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar, divided 2 tablespoons minced garlic, divided*

*1 pound chicken tenderloins, trimmed of fat*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*1 head of lettuce, cut or torn into pieces*

*1 large tomato, sliced*

*1 large cucumber, sliced*

*1 avocado, sliced*

*1 cup black olives*

### **Directions**

**1** Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

**2** In a small bowl, mix together 1/4 cup of the apple cider vinegar, 1/4

cup of the balsamic vinegar, and 1 tablespoon of the garlic. Place the chicken tenderloins in the mixture and let them marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

**3** Place the marinated chicken in a shallow baking dish (along with the marinade) and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees.

**4** While the chicken is cooking, mix together the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the apple cider vinegar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the balsamic vinegar, and 1 tablespoon of garlic along with the olive oil to create your salad dressing.

**5** When the chicken is done cooking, cut it into small slices.

**6** In a large bowl, toss together the lettuce, tomato, cucumber, avocado, olives, and chicken along with the salad dressing.

**Meal plan servings:** 1.5 vegetables, 4 ounces protein, 2.5 fats.

**Per serving:** Calories 224 (From Fat 128); Fat 14g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 18mg; Sodium 330mg; Carbohydrate 17g; Dietary Fiber 7g; Protein 11g.



## 🌶️ *Hot and Spicy Vegetarian Chili*

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 60 min • **Yield:** 6 servings *Ingredients*

*2 tablespoons olive oil*

*3 garlic cloves, finely chopped*

*1 green bell pepper, chopped*

*1 red bell pepper, chopped*

*1 medium green onion, finely chopped*

*3 large celery ribs, chopped*

*One 28-ounce can no-salt-added diced tomatoes*

*1 recipe Chili Seasoning (see the following recipe)*

*4 cups water*

*1 cup water*

*2 cups red kidney beans, cooked and drained (or one 16-ounce can, rinsed and drained) 2 cups cannellini beans, cooked and drained (or one 16-ounce can, rinsed and drained) 1 cup black beans, cooked and drained (or one 8-ounce can, rinsed and drained) 1 jalapeño, chopped*

### **Directions**

- 1** In a large stockpot, add olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic, bell peppers, onion, and celery, and cook until the vegetables are softened, about 8 to 10 minutes.
- 2** Add the tomatoes, Chili Seasoning (see the following recipe), and 4 cups of water and stir. Allow to simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes.
- 3** Stir in the kidney beans, cannellini beans, black beans, and the jalapeño (seed the jalapeño if you want less heat to the chili), and allow to simmer for an additional 30 minutes.

### **Chili Seasoning**

*1 tablespoon chili powder*

*1 teaspoon turmeric*

*2 teaspoons black pepper*

*1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes*

*1 teaspoon garlic powder*

*1 teaspoon onion powder*

*2 teaspoons ground cumin*

*1 teaspoon salt*

*1 teaspoon paprika*

*1 teaspoon dried oregano*

- 1** In a small bowl, combine the chili powder, turmeric, black pepper, red pepper flakes, garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, salt, paprika, and oregano.

***Meal plan servings:*** 1.5 starches, 1.5 ounces protein, 1.5 vegetables, 1 fat.



**Per serving:** Calories 302 (From Fat 55); Fat 6g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 488mg; Carbohydrate 50g; Dietary Fiber 15g; Protein 16g.



## • **Black Bean Quesadilla**

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 10–15 min • **Yield:** 4 servings *Ingredients*

*1 teaspoon olive oil*

*1 cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained*

*1 medium tomato, chopped*

*1 large green bell pepper, chopped*

*1 red onion, chopped*

*3 tablespoons fresh chopped cilantro*

*¼ cup chopped jalapeño pepper 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper*

*½ cup part-skim shredded Monterey Jack cheese ½ cup part-skim shredded cheddar cheese Nonstick cooking spray*

*Four 100% whole-wheat tortillas (12-inch diameter)*

*1 cup fresh salsa*

### **Directions**

- 1** In a sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the black beans, tomato, bell pepper, and onion, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the onions are tender.
- 2** Add the cilantro, jalapeños, and cayenne pepper. (Seed the jalapeño if you want the quesadillas to be less spicy.) Stir and cook for 1 minute, and then remove the vegetables and beans from the pan and set aside.
- 3** In a small bowl, mix together the Monterey Jack and cheddar cheeses to create a Mexican blend.
- 4** Spray the sauté pan with nonstick spray and place back on medium

heat. Put a tortilla in the bottom of the pan and top with  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the bean vegetable mixture and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the cheese mixture on one side.

**5** Fold tortilla to create a quesadilla. Cook the quesadilla for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, or until the tortilla becomes crispy and the cheese melts.

**6** Follow Steps 4 and 5 for the remaining quesadillas. Serve warm with a side of fresh salsa.

**Meal plan servings:** 2.5 starches, 2 ounces protein, 1 vegetable, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 416 (From Fat 106); Fat 12g (Saturated 4g); Cholesterol 18mg; Sodium 583mg; Carbohydrate 67g; Dietary Fiber 10g; Protein 18g.



## Quick and Easy Turkey Wrap

**Prep time:** 3 min • **Yield:** 1 serving *Ingredients*

2 tablespoons hummus

One 12-inch 100% whole-grain tortilla

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded lettuce

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced tomato

3 ounces low-sodium, nitrate-free turkey breast cold cut

### Directions

**1** Spread the hummus evenly over the tortilla.

**2** Layer lettuce, tomato, and turkey on the tortilla.

**3** Roll the tortilla to create a wrap sandwich.

**Meal plan servings:** 2 starches, 1 vegetable, 3 ounces protein, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 356 (From Fat 59); Fat 7g (Saturated 2g); Cholesterol 71mg; Sodium 251mg; Carbohydrate 42g; Dietary Fiber 5g; Protein 37g.



## ***Tuna and Salsa Stuffed Pepper***

**Prep time:** 10 min • **Cook time:** 5 min • **Yield:** 4 servings *Ingredients*

*4 large green bell peppers*

*8 ounces low-sodium canned tuna, packed in water*

*1 cup fresh salsa*

### **Directions**

- 1** Bring a large stockpot of water to a boil.
- 2** Slice off the tops of each pepper and remove the seeds.
- 3** Place the peppers in boiling water and cook for 5 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- 4** In a small bowl, mix together the tuna and salsa. Stuff each pepper with equal parts of the mixture. Serve the peppers chilled.

***Meal plan servings:*** 1 vegetable, 2 ounces protein.

***Per serving:*** Calories 144 (From Fat 12); Fat 1g (Saturated 0g); Cholesterol 51mg; Sodium 259mg; Carbohydrate 10g; Dietary Fiber 3g; Protein 24g.

***Tip:*** If you prefer a creamier taste, add mashed avocado or lowfat plain Greek yogurt to the tuna mixture.



## ***Tortilla Pizza***

**Prep time:** 5 min • **Cook time:** 10 min • **Yield:** 4 servings *Ingredients*

*3/4 cup tomato paste*

*2 tablespoons minced garlic*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*2 teaspoons dried basil*

*Four 8-inch 100% whole-wheat tortillas*

*1 cup sliced fresh mozzarella cheese*

*1/2 cup sliced mushrooms*

*1/2 cup sliced sweet yellow onion* *Directions*

- 1** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- 2** Make the tomato sauce by bringing the tomato paste to a simmer in a small saucepan. Add the minced garlic and olive oil, and allow it to simmer for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
- 3** Lay the tortillas on a baking sheet. Cover each one with 1/4 cup of the tomato sauce. Top each one with 1/4 cup of the cheese along with some of the mushrooms and onions. Sprinkle dried basil over the tops of the pizzas.
- 4** Place the baking sheet in the oven and bake for 6 to 8 minutes, or until the cheese is melted. Cook slightly longer for a crispier crust.

***Meal plan servings:*** 1 starch, 1 ounce protein, 1 vegetable, 1 fat.

***Per serving:*** Calories 275 (From Fat 113); Fat 13g (Saturated 5g); Cholesterol 20mg; Sodium 181mg; Carbohydrate 34g; Dietary Fiber 4g; Protein 12g.



***Shockingly Healthy (and Easy!) Calzone*** **Prep time:**

**3 min • Cook time: 1 1/2 min • Yield: 1 serving**

## ***Ingredients***

*8-inch 100% whole-wheat tortilla*

*1/4 cup shredded fat-free mozzarella cheese 1/4 cup cooked spinach*

*2 tablespoons diced tomato*

*2 tablespoons fat-free ricotta cheese*

*1/4 cup canned tomato sauce (optional)* *Directions*

- 1** Place the mozzarella cheese on one side of the tortilla. Top with the spinach, tomato, and ricotta cheese.
- 2** Fold over the tortilla to create a calzone shape. Pinch the edges together to seal the calzone. You can use a toothpick to hold the tortilla closed.
- 3** Microwave on high for 1½ minutes, or until the cheese melts. Serve warm with a side of tomato sauce for dipping, if desired.

**Meal plan servings:** 1 starch, 1.5 ounces protein, 1 vegetable.

**Per serving:** Calories 226 (From Fat 20); Fat 2g (Saturated 0g); Cholesterol 15mg; Sodium 577mg; Carbohydrate 34g; Dietary Fiber 5g; Protein 19g.

**Vary It!** Mix it up by adding different veggies and even different lean protein options. For instance, you can make one calzone with spinach and tomato and another with peppers and onions. The choices are limitless! Chapter 6 provides some lean protein options to consider.



## ***Turkey Burger and Sweet Potato Fries***

**Prep time:** 15 min • **Cook time:** 45–60 min • **Yield:** 4 servings *Ingredients*

*1 pound ground 98% fat-free turkey breast*

*1 tablespoon minced garlic*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*2 tablespoons diced shallots*

*¼ cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar*

*2 teaspoons black pepper*

*1 tablespoon dried rosemary*

*Four 100% whole-wheat hamburger buns*

### **Directions**

- 1** In a large bowl, mix together the ground turkey, garlic, olive oil,

shallots, breadcrumbs, vinegar, black pepper, and rosemary. Use your hands to evenly mix the seasonings throughout the meat.

**2** Heat a sauté pan over medium heat. In the meantime, create four even-sized patties with the meat mixture.

**3** Add the patties to the pan and cook for 8–10 minutes, or until they reach an internal temperature of 180 degrees. Flip the patties halfway through cooking.

**4** Place the cooked patties on hamburger buns and serve warm with the Sweet Potato Fries (see the following recipe).

### **Sweet Potato Fries**

*Two 6-ounce sweet potatoes*

*1 tablespoon olive oil*

*2 tablespoons cinnamon*

**1** Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

**2** Slice each potato into 15 skinny fries and place on a large baking sheet. Drizzle the olive oil over the fries and top with cinnamon.

**3** Bake for 30 minutes, and then flip the fries over. Bake for an additional 15 to 30 minutes, or until the fries are the desired texture (longer cooking time for crispier fries).

***Meal plan servings:*** 3 starches, 4 ounces protein, 1 fat.

***Per serving:*** Calories 375 (From Fat 88); Fat 10g (Saturated 2g); Cholesterol 74mg; Sodium 269mg; Carbohydrate 41g; Dietary Fiber 8g; Protein 32g.

***Tip:*** Top your burger with belly fighters like avocado, or add a metabolism kick by tossing spices like cayenne pepper into your burgers before cooking.



## **Belly-Beating Bean Burrito**

**Prep time:** *5 min* • **Cook time:** *15 min* • **Yield:** *4 servings* *Ingredients*

*4 teaspoons olive oil*

*1 medium red onion, diced*

*3 cloves of garlic, minced*

*1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms*

*1 cup cannellini beans, cooked and drained (or one 8-ounce can, rinsed and drained) 1 cup kidney beans, cooked and drained (or one 8-ounce can, rinsed and drained) 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar*

*1 tablespoon red wine vinegar*

*1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar*

*1 teaspoon dried basil*

*1 teaspoon dried thyme*

*1 teaspoon dried oregano*

*1 tablespoon fresh chopped cilantro*

*1 teaspoon black pepper*

*1 cup shredded romaine lettuce*

*1/2 cup shredded carrots*

*Four 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas*

## **Directions**

**1** Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat.

**2** Sauté the onion, garlic, and mushrooms until tender, about 7 to 8 minutes.

**3** Add the kidney beans, cannellini beans, balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, apple cider vinegar, basil, thyme, oregano, cilantro, and pepper. Sauté for 5 to 7 minutes, or until heated through, and then remove from the heat.

**4** Top each tortilla with 1/4 cup shredded lettuce, 1/8 cup shredded carrots, and 3/4 cup cooked bean mixture.

**5** Wrap each tortilla and serve warm.

**Meal plan servings:** 2 starches, 1 ounce protein, 2 vegetables, 1 fat.

**Per serving:** Calories 302 (From Fat 64); Fat 7g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 150mg; Carbohydrate 52g; Dietary Fiber 10g; Protein 13g.

**Tip:** If you enjoy sour cream on your burrito, top each tortilla with lowfat, plain Greek yogurt instead.



## **Hummus and Avocado Sandwich**

**Prep time:** 7 min • **Yield:** 2 servings *Ingredients*

4 slices 100% whole-grain bread

1 avocado, pitted and sliced

1 teaspoon black pepper

1 tablespoon fresh chopped cilantro

4 tablespoons hummus (homemade or store-bought)

½ cup chopped cucumber

1 medium tomato, sliced

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

### **Directions**

**1** Toast the bread. While the bread is toasting, mash the avocado with a fork in a small bowl. Mix in the black pepper and cilantro.

**2** Spread 2 tablespoons of the hummus over two of the slices of bread. Then top each slice with half of the mashed avocado.

**3** Sprinkle the chopped cucumber over the avocado and top with a few slices of tomato. Drizzle balsamic vinegar over the tomato. Top each with a toasted slice of bread.

**Meal plan servings:** 2 starches, 1 vegetable, 3 fats.



**Per serving:** *Calories 345 (From Fat 158); Fat 18g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 365mg; Carbohydrate 42g; Dietary Fiber 14g; Protein 11g.*

**Tip:** *For extra flavor and belly-fighting goodness, try a sprouted bread instead of whole-wheat.*

## Part IV

# Overcoming Obstacles and Managing Your Progress



## In this part . . .

I show you the most common pitfalls and challenges you may encounter and exactly how to handle them so you don't get off track with your Belly Fat Diet plan. I even show you how to follow the plan with specific dietary restrictions, such as vegan or vegetarian eating

eating.

And because one of the most difficult parts of losing weight is keeping it off long-term, I devote a large part of this section to explaining weight maintenance. I give you a detailed plan to prevent weight gain and keep your belly flat permanently.

## Chapter 20

# Ten Nutrients That Shrink Your Belly

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Looking at some nutrients that can promote fat loss
  - ▶ Identifying the health benefits of certain compounds and nutrients
- 

Healthy eating and exercise can shrink your waistline and blast away belly fat. But certain nutrients also have the ability to help you burn belly fat faster and more effectively. Incorporating the ten nutrients in this chapter on a regular basis through seasonings, food choices, and supplements may help you shed fat, especially around your midsection, more productively, helping you to reach your weight loss goals even faster!

## Calcium Pyruvate

Calcium pyruvate is a substance that occurs naturally and is made in your body during digestion and metabolism. This nutrient's main role is to make energy and fuel your cells. Some new research, however, indicates that it may also be a powerful fat fighter.

A study done by the University of Pittsburgh found that obese women lost 48 percent more fat when following a calorie-restricted diet with supplemental calcium pyruvate than those women following the diet alone. It appears that calcium pyruvate can get into the fat cells and help them burn energy more effectively, promoting more weight loss.

Calcium pyruvate occurs naturally in foods like red apples, red grapes, red wine, and cheeses. It can also be taken in supplemental form. If supplementing with calcium pyruvate, take 1,000 milligrams

form. If supplementing with calcium pyruvate, take 1,000 milligrams on an empty stomach before each meal up to three times per day. Taking too much of this supplement may cause nausea, however.

## Caraway Seeds

Bloating and gas can occur in your gastrointestinal tract for a number of reasons. And increased gas can cause your belly to bloat. To help get rid of gas, try snacking on caraway seeds. Eat a small handful (about 1 tablespoon) after meals, especially meals that contain gas-producing foods.

Caraway seeds are effective at reducing gas and bloating because they're a powerful digestive aid. They help to expel and eliminate gas due to their carminative properties. Caraway seeds are also beneficial at keeping bloat away because they help the good bacteria in your gastrointestinal tract digest and break down food while inhibiting the growth of the bad bacteria.

## Cinnamon

Research has found that the active compound methylhydroxy chalcone polymer (MHCP) in cinnamon makes fat cells more receptive to insulin. When cells are more receptive to insulin, they allow the insulin to transport sugar into the cells for energy, thus keeping insulin levels in the bloodstream low. High insulin levels trigger the body to store more fat, especially in your midsection. So consuming a seasoning like cinnamon that helps maintain healthy levels of insulin is a great way to combat belly fat.

Try sprinkling cinnamon on everything from oatmeal to apples to popcorn! Cinnamon supplements are also available and may help provide belly-slimming benefits.

## Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG)

The catechins in green tea, specifically epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), are

The main polyphenol, epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), in green tea has been shown to have thermogenic properties and to help increase fat oxidation. In fact, one study found that when overweight individuals consumed the same number of calories and performed the same amount of exercise, those drinking green tea lost more weight, especially weight from the abdomen. Green tea is also loaded with powerful antioxidants, which help decrease inflammation (another belly-fat contributor) and fight off disease and infection. Aim for brewed green tea over powders and supplements.

## Fucoxanthin

Fucoxanthin is a carotenoid found in brown seaweed. Research on this compound suggests it may be a powerful fat fighter. In animal studies, overweight and obese mice were found to lose 5 to 10 percent of their entire body weight when consuming fucoxanthin. Although research is still unclear as to exactly how fucoxanthin promotes weight loss, it may be due to its ability to target a specific protein that increases the rate at which abdominal fat is burned.

Edible brown seaweed is available in Japanese specialty stores and health food stores under the names *wakame* and *hijiki*. Fucoxanthin is available as a nutritional supplement, but more research is still needed in humans to see whether this compound is as effective in promoting weight loss as it is in animals. Until more research is done, I recommend adding brown seaweed into recipes, such as miso soup, rather than consuming it as a supplement. If you do choose to consume supplemental fucoxanthin, don't exceed 500 milligrams per day.

## Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3-rich foods have been shown to help reduce abdominal fat storage. Studies have also shown that they keep the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline from peaking, helping to prevent damage to your body from chronic stress and also helping prevent

damage to your body from chronic stress and also helping prevent increased fat storage caused by elevated cortisol levels.

Fatty fish, such as salmon, is a great source of omega-3 fatty acids. However, plant-based sources, such as chia seeds, walnuts, and flaxseed, are terrific sources as well. Supplemental omega-3 fatty acids are also fine. If you do take a supplement, an appropriate dosage is 1,000–2,000 milligrams per day. Omega-3 fatty acids can act as a blood thinner, so make sure to discuss with your physician whether this supplement is appropriate for you.

## Quercetin

Quercetin, a powerful flavonoid, has been shown to not only improve the immune system and promote cardiovascular health but also fight belly fat. Research has shown that this flavonoid can block baby fat cells from maturing and is more effective at inhibiting the rate of new fat cell formation than any other flavonoid. Quercetin also is effective at decreasing inflammation in the body.

Large amounts of quercetin are found in apples, onions (especially red onions), and green tea. Red grapes, tomatoes, broccoli, cherries, raspberries, and leafy greens are also excellent sources. Aim to take in quercetin from foods rather than supplements, because foods rich in quercetin contain many additional health benefits.

## Resveratrol

Studies have indicated that high levels of resveratrol in your diet may boost metabolism, helping you to burn more calories (and more belly fat) throughout the day. Resveratrol has also been shown to suppress levels of the hormone estrogen. High levels of estrogen in your body promote increased fat storage, so suppressing these levels may decrease body fat while helping to increase lean muscle mass.

Resveratrol is found in red grapes, red wine, peanuts, and dark

chocolate. Supplements are available, but make sure to consult your physician before increasing your intake of resveratrol in a supplement form, especially if you're taking any hormone-based medication.

## Vitamin C

When the stress hormone cortisol is chronically elevated in the body, you can experience increased fat storage in the abdominal area. However, research has shown that vitamin C helps reduce stress hormone levels and return the stress hormone cortisol to normal levels after a stressful situation. This reduction in cortisol may help to prevent increased belly-fat storage.

Aim to consume at least two foods rich in vitamin C each day. Options include oranges, kiwis, and green peppers. Vitamin C is available in supplement form, but taking in nutrients through food is always the best option. If you do opt for a supplement, keep your dosage to 500 milligrams per day and choose a time-released formula for the best benefit.

## Water

How much simpler can it get? Just drinking water may shrink your belly! A study from the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism showed that individuals increased their metabolic rates by 30 percent after drinking approximately 17 ounces of water. Other research indicates that increasing fluid volume in the body may help to promote the breakdown of fat. And because dehydration can suppress metabolism, you have even more reasons to drink up! Aim for at least 64 ounces of water daily.



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