

jul 27, 2015

body

10 Things Your Belly Fat Is Trying to Tell You

...that diet books don't.



By Kayla Keegan



If your stomach fat could have some one-on-one #realtalk with you, here's what registered dietitian Lindsay Martin, MS, of [Hilton Head Health](#), says it would want you to know:

1. "Spot-reducing isn't a thing. Sorry."

We all want [Kourtney Kardashian's abs](#), but it's going to take you forever to get 'em if you just do 100 sit-ups a night and five-minute workout videos, according to Martin. More so than any "ab-specific" exercises, keeping track of what you put in your body is **the number-one key** to losing belly fat, along with de-junking your diet of refined carbohydrates and excessive sugar. Ab workouts are great and all, but they won't do anything in the long run unless you stop making those 10 p.m. runs to the fridge.

2. "You can't see or feel it, but I'm not just hanging out right now."

In other words, a thing called chronic systemic inflammation may be happening underneath what you can grab. This deeper, internal layer is visceral fat, which can sometimes surround your organs and accumulate harmful inflammatory substances called adipokines and cytokines that have been linked to insulin resistance, hypertension, Type II diabetes, and more. But don't panic—just because you have belly fat doesn't mean you're going to develop these health problems. Talk to your doctor if you're concerned, but generally speaking, a little flab is perfectly a-okay.

3. "More plants, please."

Obviously you should always try to **eat more vegetables**, but, specifically, Martin says to go for **dietary fiber-loaded** ones, like carrots, peas, broccoli, and brussels sprouts. Recent **research** has found that plant-based diets promote a healthy gut microbiome—the super-important, bacteria-loaded ecosystem that keeps our digestive track on point and our metabolism in check. Of course, you should still be eating lean protein and healthy fats to **supercharge your metabolism** and get rid of stubborn abdominal fat, but you might not be showing results if you forget to supplement 'em with a plate full of veggies.

4. "I can't shrink through cardio alone."

Okay, maybe *a little* bit, but again, sweat sessions aren't everything. Soul Cycle is definitely good exercise, but Martin says the most effective classes for your belly are the ones that involve a strength-training component. TRX, barre, yoga, and Pilates can be great alternatives and yield much better results than running on the treadmill or sweating your butt off on the bike.

5. "Ab-friendly foods are NOT made, they're grown."

Everyone knows that food packaging labels can be deceiving already, but if the food has more than one ingredient in it, it probably isn't the best thing to be eating to reduce your waistline. Next time you're debating snacking on a low-cal nutrition bar "loaded" with protein or a piece of fresh fruit, Martin says to always choose the whole food.

6. "I don't make you feel bloated."

In other words, it's kinda pointless to fear bloat-causing **foods**, unless of course you are about to go to the beach or jean shopping. Excess belly fat has absolutely nothing to do with bloat, so Martin believes there's really no reason to eliminate veggies that make you temporarily balloon out a bit, especially considering a lot of common culprits contain essential dietary fiber.

7. "Olympic lifts will make me disappear faster!"

The power-clean exercise—which involves doing front squats with the bar in your hands with your elbows pointed forward—pretty much guarantees you'll build a solid core, one of the most important things you can do to kiss belly fat goodbye forever. If you've never done the move before, Martin recommends having a trainer show you how to do it *before* trying it on your own to prevent injury. Once you have the Olympic lift down pat, it's time to start building up those other muscles with overhead squats, back squats, push presses, and push-ups. Even though you might not be directly targeting your belly with these moves, Martin says you'll shed more inches over time if you are working out your entire bod, not just your stomach.

8. "Consistent exercise is your best friend, but my worst nightmare."

Take the time to find an exercise routine you actually enjoy doing and then stick to it to keep your metabolic rate high, says Martin. And yes, there is a workout for everyone. Even if you're the busiest mom ever, a quick, 15-minute regimen with running, 15 body squats, 10 sit-ups, and five push-ups can make a huge difference over time.

9. "I'm sticking around until you start drinking more water."

There's a reason you keep hearing about staying hydrated all the time: It's because you're *still* not drinking enough H₂O. That, or you're counteracting your progress by consuming too much alcohol, soda, or coffee without even realizing it. To make sure you're not overdoing it with liquid calories or dehydrating drinks, Martin believes it's best to come up with a way to keep track of your beverages and prioritize what you sip, with water, of course, being at the top of your list. Try putting eight rubber bands on your water bottle and move one down each time you drink an eight-ounce glass of water. Or, before making that afternoon **Starbucks latte run**, go to the sink and fill up your 32-ounce water bottle and drink at least two of these every day.

10. "If I'm still here after all your hard work, it's 'cause you aren't **getting enough sleep."**

Yes, even "those" seemingly perfect women can fall prey to stubborn belly fat if they forget to catch enough zzz's. In fact, Martin believes it's one of the most overlooked factors in losing weight, even though it's probably the easiest quick fix out there. Women who aren't getting enough sleep sometimes have trouble delegating all of their to-do's. If this is you, take a look at your schedule and see where you can hand off some of the workload so your bedtime routine doesn't suffer.