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# Flat Belly Cookbook

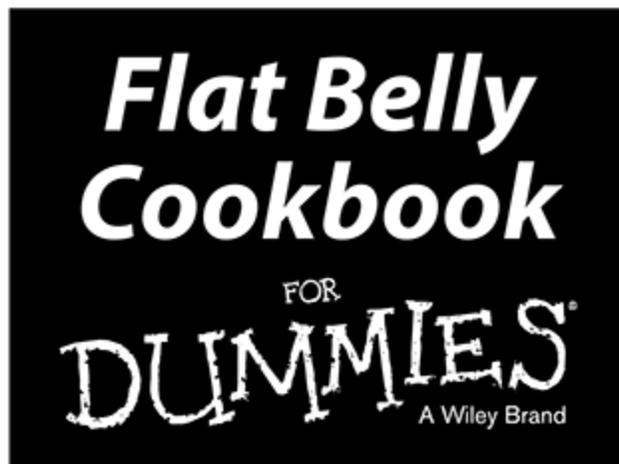
FOR  
**DUMMIES**<sup>®</sup>  
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## Learn to:

- Understand the Belly Fat Diet
- Make 100+ delicious recipes developed by America's Belly Fat Fighter
- Change your body — and your life

**Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, CDE**  
**Tara Gidus, RD**  
**Kristina LaRue, RD**





**by Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, CDE, LDN;  
Tara Gidus, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN; and  
Kristina LaRue, RD, LDN, CLT**

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DUMMIES<sup>®</sup>  
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## **Flat Belly Cookbook For Dummies®**

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# Flat Belly Cookbook For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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Are you completely satisfied with your waistline? Do you have a toned, flat stomach? If not, you're not alone. Most people aren't happy with their stomachs and want flatter, firmer midsections. But many of them don't know where to start. That's where this book comes in! If you're looking for a blueprint to the flat belly of your dreams, you're in the right place.

Having excess belly fat is not only undesirable for cosmetic reasons, but also incredibly dangerous to your health. In fact, wide waistlines may just be one of the biggest health concerns in the United States. Why? Because they indicate an excessive amount of *visceral fat* (also known as *belly fat*), which is the most dangerous fat for your health. Belly fat has been associated with an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and even dementia! So, slimming your midsection is important not just to look better in your bathing suit, but also to improve your health long term!

How can you go about slimming your belly? Does shedding belly fat mean sacrificing all your favorite foods and saying goodbye to flavor? Absolutely not! That's why we've written this book. *Flat Belly Cookbook For Dummies* is your blueprint to success. Throughout this book, you find the steps you need to take in order to shed excess fat and keep it off for good — all while eating the foods you love (and never thought possible while on a weight loss plan). And even better, you won't feel hungry and you'll never feel deprived! Think losing weight means giving up on foods like pasta, chocolate, and even cocktails? Think again! In this book, we show you just how to incorporate all these decadent options as part of a meal plan you can actually stick with.

You don't need to be a chef to follow the recipes in this book. In fact, even if you've never set foot in the kitchen before, we have you covered. Throughout this book, we offer tips and tricks to make cooking a breeze. And we keep your time in mind, too. This book is packed full of quick meal and recipe options, so even the busiest person can find success.

## ***About This Book***

Fad diets and cookie-cutter diets don't work. If they did, the United States wouldn't be facing the obesity crisis it's currently in. So, what *does* work? Individualizing your weight loss plan. Just like no two individuals are exactly the same, no two paths toward weight loss goals should be exactly the same either. That's what sets the Belly Fat Diet plan apart from other weight loss plans you may have tried in the past. The plan we cover in this book provides unique weight loss paths based on your sex, age, and even personality, to help you custom-tailor your weight loss plan to your individual needs. Plus, this book provides realistic, practical tips and advice. We know that you're crunched for time, under stress, and facing real-world problems. Your food choices aren't always your main priority. That's why this book takes away the guesswork and simplifies your weight loss plan so you can reach your goals and maintain them permanently!

This book not only helps you decode food labels, identify belly fat-fighting nutrients, and plan your meals, but also provides more than a hundred mouth-watering recipes that will satisfy all your cravings. In fact, you won't feel like you're following a weight loss plan at all!

As you're reading this book, keep in mind that sidebars (text in gray boxes) and anything marked with the

Technical Stuff icon (see “Icons Used in This Book,” later) are skippable.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you’re reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it’s noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn’t exist. If you’re reading this as an e-book, you’ve got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Finally, here are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to the recipes. Unless otherwise specified,

- ✓ Eggs are large.
- ✓ Pepper is freshly ground black pepper.
- ✓ Butter is unsalted.
- ✓ Flour is all-purpose unless otherwise specified.
- ✓ Sugar is granulated unless otherwise noted.
- ✓ All herbs are fresh unless dried herbs are specified.
- ✓ All temperatures are Fahrenheit. (Refer to the Appendix for information about converting temperatures to Celsius.)
- 🍅 Vegetarian recipes are marked by a small tomato icon (like the one to the left) in the Recipes in This Chapter lists.

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

We don’t make too many assumptions about you (you know what they say about assuming), but we do assume a few things:

- ✓ You're trying to lose weight and shed unwanted belly fat.
- ✓ You've made the commitment to begin making lifestyle changes to improve your overall health and lose weight.
- ✓ You enjoy food and don't want to sacrifice great taste in order to achieve your goal weight. (Don't worry — you don't have to!)
- ✓ You have a hectic schedule and are often on the run. Although you want to eat healthy and get in better shape, life can often get in the way.

## *Icons Used in This Book*

Throughout this book, you'll notice *icons* (small images in the margins that are designed to call your attention to specific pieces of information). Here are the icons we use in this book and a key to what they mean:



When you see the Tip icon, you're sure to find helpful tips and practical advice to help flatten your midsection and promote long-term weight loss.



We use the Remember icon when we mention information that's worth, well, remembering. Typically, these paragraphs help you stay on track to achieve your long-term weight loss goals.



When we mention a food or nutrient that may pack on belly fat or identify a common obstacle to weight loss, we grab your attention with the Warning icon.



We use the Technical Stuff icon when we share information that's interesting but not essential to your understanding of the subject at hand. If you're in a hurry, you can skip anything marked with this icon.

## ***Beyond the Book***

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the free Cheat Sheet at [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/flatbellycookbook](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/flatbellycookbook) for the top five ways to flatten your abs, tips on maintaining your weight loss long term, and more.

## ***Where to Go from Here***

If you're a seasoned dieter, you may have tried unsuccessfully in the past to shed belly fat for good. But like most people trying to lose weight, you may have hit a road block or two on your journey to your long-term goals. Most likely, you have a specific area or two that you struggle with, such as eating on the run or dealing with hunger. Instead of reading through this book in order, page by page, you can skip right to the areas you need to focus on the most. So, look over the Table of Contents and see what topics seem the most relevant or interesting to you. Then turn right to them!

If you're just starting out and you aren't sure what belly fat is or how to tell if you have too much, start by reading [Chapter 1](#), where you find all the belly fat basics. If you already know the dangers of an elevated waistline and just want to know how to get started shedding unwanted

pounds and inches, head to [Chapter 4](#) to learn about the Belly Fat Diet plans and which is best for you. And if you're familiar with the Belly Fat Diet and you're looking for new and delicious recipes that work within your plan, head to Parts II through IV to dive into the more than 100 belly fat-burning recipes this book serves up.

Part I  
**Getting Started with the  
Belly Fat Diet**



*For Dummies* can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) to learn more and do more

with *For Dummies*.

## ***In this part . . .***

- ✓ Understand the anatomy of belly fat and the associated health dangers.
- ✓ Identify whether you have excess belly fat.
- ✓ Discover which Belly Fat Diet plan is right for you.
- ✓ Find superfoods that fight off belly fat.
- ✓ Decode a food label to maximize your Belly Fat Diet plan results.

# Chapter 1

## Wrapping Your Mind around Belly Fat

---

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

- ▶ Understanding what belly fat is
  - ▶ Seeing why people develop belly fat
  - ▶ Discovering the health consequences of too much belly fat
  - ▶ Assessing your own health risks
- 

You've heard it in the news and possibly seen it in the mirror. *Belly fat* seems to be the latest buzzword. But what exactly is it? How do you know if you have too much? And is belly fat really any different from fat in other parts of your body? The truth is that belly fat, also known as *visceral fat*, is, indeed, much different from fat in other areas. In fact, belly fat is considered the single most harmful form of fat in your entire body! Having a high level of belly fat has been linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and even certain cancers. And here's some surprising news: You don't have to be overweight to have too much belly fat. Even people at their ideal body weight can have too high a percentage of body fat, specifically in the midsection. Even at a normal body weight, if your waistline expands by 4 inches over time, this can increase your risk for stroke by as much as 15 percent!

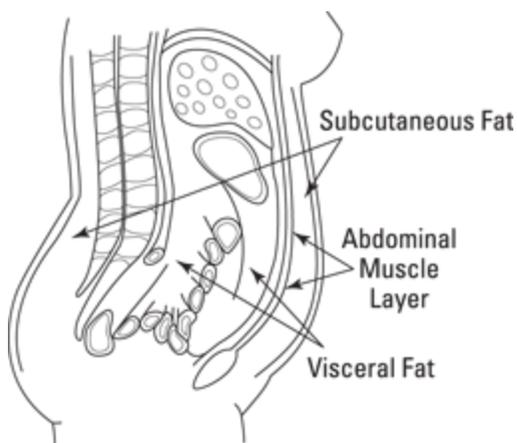
Throughout this chapter, we explain what belly fat is, where excess belly fat comes from, the health consequences of having too much belly fat, and how to determine if you have too much. When you understand belly fat and how you accumulate it, you can start taking action to reduce it in order to improve your overall health, appearance, and energy levels!

## ***What Is Belly Fat?***

To understand belly fat, first you need to understand the various types of fat in your body. The body contains three distinct types of fat:

- ✓ **Triglycerides:** Triglycerides make up about 95 percent of all the fat in your body. This is the fat that circulates in your bloodstream and provides a source of energy to your body.
- ✓ **Subcutaneous fat:** Subcutaneous fat is the layer of fat that lies right below the skin's surface, between the skin and the abdominal wall. This is the fat that you can pinch with your fingers. It's also typically the fat that you aim to reduce for cosmetic reasons.
- ✓ **Visceral fat:** The last type of fat in your body is visceral fat, or what is often referred to as belly fat. This fat hangs below the muscles of your abdomen where it's in close proximity to most of your vital organs. And that's what makes this fat so dangerous. Because of its location, visceral fat is the easiest source of energy for your internal organs, providing them with a constant, steady stream of energy while at the same time exposing them to toxic hormones and chemicals. And that's one reason that this fat is so deadly.

[Figure 1-1](#) illustrates where subcutaneous fat and visceral fat are located. As you can see, subcutaneous fat is the outermost layer of fat and sits on top of abdominal muscles. Below the abdominal muscle is where visceral fat lies. Even though you can't pinch this fat or see it with your eyes, chances are, if you have a large amount of subcutaneous fat, you also have an excessive amount of visceral fat. And as the figure shows, this dangerous fat surrounds all the organs in the abdominal cavity.



*Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics*

**Figure 1-1:** Where subcutaneous fat and visceral fat are located.

Fat cells don't just passively hang around and provide stored energy. Research has found that fat cells are actually *metabolically active*, meaning that they secrete hormones and chemicals that can impact every organ in your body. When you're at a healthy body weight and you have a healthy level of body fat, the chemicals and hormones secreted by fat cells are healthy. They help to regulate appetite and insulin levels, and even help you to burn stored fat. But when you have too many fat cells or your fat cells become larger in size than normal (which can happen in people who are overweight or have excess body fat), your fat cells are producing more hormones and chemicals than your body needs, which, over time,

can impact your health, increase inflammation in your body, and increase your risk for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.



So, excessive fat anywhere in your body can be damaging, but what makes visceral fat the most dangerous fat is that it's thought to produce an even larger amount of harmful chemicals than subcutaneous fat does. Because visceral fat is so close to your organs, excess visceral fat can cause some serious damage throughout your body. In addition, visceral fat surrounds your organs and, over time, can place excess pressure on them, virtually strangling the organs and putting stress on their ability to function correctly.

## ***Why Does Belly Fat Develop?***

In order to successfully shed belly fat once and for all, it helps to know the reasons that you accumulated excessive belly fat in the first place. Once you know where this belly fat is coming from and why, you can begin to make the changes needed to get rid of it for good!

Excessive accumulation of belly fat doesn't come from just one place or one behavior. Many factors can impact belly fat. Of course, what you put into your mouth plays a major role, but other factors also can increase or decrease your level of belly fat, including your lifestyle (for example, your stress level and how much sleep you get) and hormones. In this section, we cover all these factors.

## ***Diet***

How and what you eat can play a major role in the amount of belly fat you accumulate. By limiting your intake of belly-bloating foods and transitioning to alternatives that can actually slim your waistline, not only can you lose body weight, but you can significantly reduce your waistline.



Here are some of the biggest dietary contributors to belly fat, along with some slimming alternatives:

- ✓ **Simple sugars:** If you sprinkle sugar on your cereal or sip on soda, sweetened teas, and fruit drinks, you're providing your body with a large amount of simple sugars. Simple sugar is sugar in its simplest form — your body can use this sugar for energy with very little effort. Unfortunately, because simple sugars are so easily utilized by your body for energy, they can lead to rapid spikes in blood sugar. This, in turn, triggers a rapid increase in insulin, which signals your body to store more fat (especially belly fat).



Avoid simple sugars by choosing low-sugar and sugar-free beverages whenever possible. Instead, opt for water, naturally flavored seltzer, or unsweetened ice teas. To sweeten foods, use seasonings such as cinnamon instead of added sugar.

- ✓ **Refined carbohydrates:** Foods that are made with enriched and white flours are called *refined carbohydrates*. Your body digests these carbohydrates rapidly, leading to spikes in both insulin and blood glucose levels (see “Insulin,” later in this chapter).



Instead, choose 100 percent whole-grain options. You can identify these by looking for the first ingredient listed on the label — it should contain the word *whole* (such as *whole oat flour* or *whole wheat flour*).

- ✔ **Unhealthy fats:** Eating a meal that contains fat doesn't necessarily mean that you'll increase your body fat. However, certain types of dietary fat *do* encourage the increase of belly fat. Saturated fats (which are found in high-fat animal proteins, butter, cream, and so on) and trans fats (which are found in many processed and commercial baked and fried goods) can have very negative impacts on overall health. A diet high in these fats can increase inflammation, increase your risk of heart disease and diabetes, and of course, pack on the belly fat!



These fats can have such an impact on belly fat that a study out of Johns Hopkins University found the amount of fat surrounding your abdomen is directly proportional to the amount of saturated fat you take in through your diet.



On the flip side, unsaturated fats — specifically, monounsaturated fats (found in olive oil, almonds, avocados, and so on) and omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish, walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and so on) — have been found to *decrease* belly fat. By replacing saturated fats and trans fats with monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids, you can improve your overall health, as well as reduce your waistline.

✓ **High-sugar, high-fat drinks:** What you drink may be just as important for shedding belly fat as what you eat. Drinks can seem harmless, but they actually can cause significant damage to your health and your waistline. In fact, consuming excessive fluid calories may be the most damaging thing you can do to your belly. Drinking your calories in the form of soda, juice, whole milk, and coffee loaded with creamers and sugar can set off a cascading effect of elevated blood glucose and insulin levels, resulting in an increased amount of belly fat storage. What's even worse is that fluids don't keep you full in the same way that solid foods do. So, now you've consumed calories, but you're still hungry. This combination can lead you to eat more, resulting in weight gain.



Instead of consuming high-sugar, high-fat drinks, opt for low-sugar, low-calorie beverages such as water, seltzer (even naturally flavored seltzers), unsweetened teas and coffees, and low-fat milk.

Diet isn't just about *what* you eat, it's also about *how* you eat. Have you ever thought, "I'll just skip breakfast so I can limit my total daily calories and lose weight"? If so, did this strategy work for you? Most likely, no. Although you may save a few calories by skipping a meal, this strategy will eventually backfire and lead to your gaining even more weight and belly fat. Why? Because skipping meals can lead to excessive hunger. Think about the last time you were extremely hungry. Were you craving a salad, or did you want to down a bag of chips followed by a few slices of pizza? Usually, when you get too hungry, your mind doesn't want healthier food options. Instead, you start to crave foods high in unhealthy fats or rich in refined carbohydrates. You may also eat faster than you

normally would, causing you to miss the signs that you're full, which can result in overeating.

Plus, skipping meals can confuse your body. Your body begins to wonder when the next meal is coming, or if it's coming at all. Now, instead of burning up stored fat for energy, it protects you by slowing down your metabolism to *conserve* energy, in case potential famine or starvation is on the horizon. In addition, your body works to store more fat to save up additional energy reserves in case the next meal never comes. Although this strategy would be helpful if you truly were in danger of starvation, when you intentionally skip meals, it can prevent you from losing weight and belly fat.



The best strategy for belly fat loss and weight loss is to eat a balanced meal or snack every three to four hours. This way, you avoid excessive hunger and food cravings, and keep your metabolism functioning at its peak.

## ***Lifestyle***

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of 2011, 36 percent of all American adults over age 20 are now obese with another 33 percent classified as being overweight. In addition, the CDC also states that 17 percent of children are now classified as obese. That means that more than half the country is above their ideal body weight, and our children are well on their way. So, what's causing so many people to gain weight and keep them from being able to lose it? There isn't a simple answer, but many lifestyle factors play a role in the obesity epidemic.

Over the past few decades, people's schedules have been getting busier, work demands have been getting higher,

and many people work longer hours while struggling to make ends meet in an uncertain economy. (It's no wonder stress levels are high!) You may feel as though you don't have a minute to sit and relax, or even breathe, between juggling work, family, and your other responsibilities. And when you're overscheduled, you may not find the time to exercise or to prepare a healthy meal. Instead, you may pull into a drive-thru and eat your meal in front of the computer or TV. This can cause you to eat foods rich in refined carbohydrates, saturated fats, and sodium — the perfect recipe for increased belly fat.

Another side effect of an overscheduled, stressful lifestyle is lack of sleep. Maybe you're staying up late to meet a deadline or you can't fall asleep at night because your mind is racing with thoughts of the bills you need to pay and all the things you need to do tomorrow that you didn't get done today. Getting too little sleep can have a major impact on your overall health. Inadequate sleep raises stress hormone levels, can slow metabolism, and can even increase hunger — a combination that is sure to result in increased belly fat!

## ***Hormones***

Many, many hormones are constantly cycling through your body each and every day. However, when some of these hormones are out of balance, it can trigger your body to start storing fat, specifically in your midsection. This can lead to an accumulation of excessive subcutaneous fat, as well as visceral fat. Insulin and stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, are the main hormones that impact belly fat.

## ***Insulin***

When you eat, your digestive system breaks down food into small particles that can be used for fuel in your