

Q "How can I get rid of my belly fat for summer?"

Swimsuit season is here, and if you're like most of us, you'd love to slim your middle! There's good news: Studies have found that belly fat responds very well to strategic diet and lifestyle changes! Here's how to tame tummy fat for good!

1 Tweak your diet for a thinner middle!

Certain foods and eating habits have serious belly-fat-busting power, says nutritionist Erin Palinski. Her secrets:

Don't go low-fat!

A study shows substituting good-for-you monounsaturated fats (like those in olive oil and flaxseed) for "bad" fats like those in baked goods can help you melt belly fat without changing your calorie intake! What's more, healthy omega-3 fats like those found in salmon and walnuts halt fat storage in the abdomen!

Sip a frosty glass of iced tea!

Research proves that the beneficial compounds in green tea decrease belly fat. In fact, in one study, when two groups of people ate the same amount of calories and exercised the same amount, the group who drank green tea lost more weight and more abdominal fat!

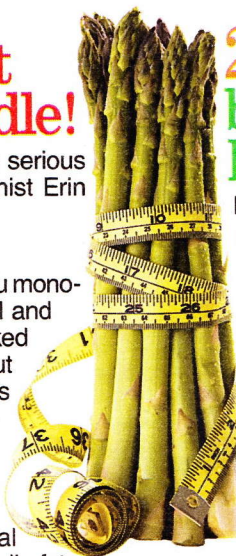


Slim down with C!

Studies show the stress hormone cortisol increases fat storage in the abdomen—but new research proves that vitamin C helps return cortisol to normal levels after a tense situation, preventing fat storage. Palinski recommends eating two vitamin C-rich foods a day, such as oranges and red bell peppers.

Caffeinate with care!

Research shows that stimulants like caffeine cause the body to go into "fight or flight" mode, which elevates belly-fattening stress hormones. Can't give up your joe? Limit yourself to two cups per day.



2 Stabilize belly-fat-causing hormones!

Packed on pounds around your middle that you can't shake? The culprit is likely your hormones, says nutritionist Genie James. Research shows that the average woman gains one to two pounds around her middle between the ages of 35 and 55—often due to shifting hormones. To turn hormone-related belly fat weight gain around, James recommends that you:

Reach for these veggies!

Veggies like asparagus, broccoli and spinach are belly-fat-fighting powerhouses because they contain a phytonutrient called Indole-3-Carbinol (I3C) that helps the body process estrogen effectively, preventing it from promoting tummy fat. Aim for two servings a day. Or try the supplement diindolymethane (DIM), a phytonutrient like I3C, it supports enzymes that improve healthy estrogen metabolism. Take 200 mg. daily. **Important:** Always check with your doctor before taking any new supplement.

Snack on citrus fruits!

A substance called d-Limonene found in the oils of citrus fruits promotes the detoxification of estrogen, which helps decrease fat around your middle! Have the fruit instead of the juice—otherwise, you miss out on belly-fat-blasting fiber.

Bulk up on insoluble fiber!

Insoluble fiber found in whole grains, seeds, carrots, cucumbers, celery and tomatoes is not only good for pushing extra calories out of your system, it will actually bind to extra belly-fat-inducing estrogen in your digestive tract and move that out as well!



3 The moves that melt belly fat!

Here, trainer Cindy Whitmarsh shares her top belly-fat-fighting moves:

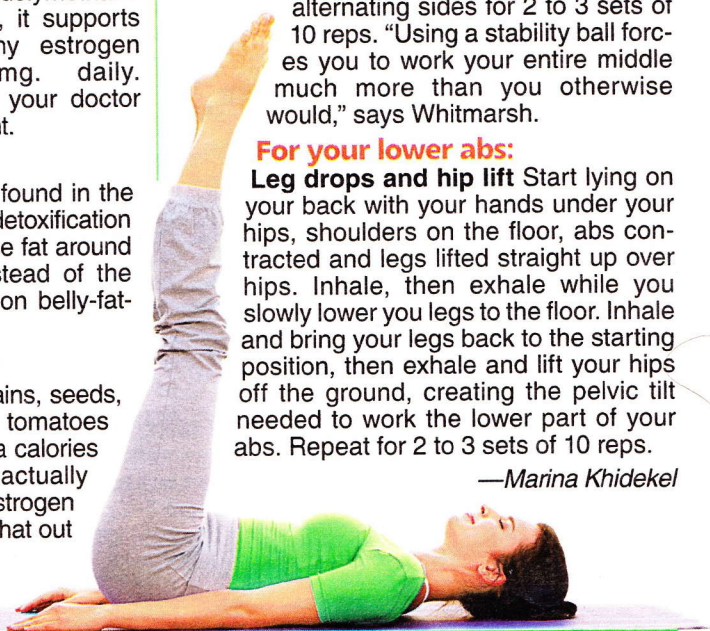
For your upper and middle abs:

Stability ball knee taps Lie on a stability ball (about \$20 at sporting-goods stores) so your lower back is supported on the ball and your shoulder blades are off the ball. Reach one hand to the opposite knee and back again, alternating sides for 2 to 3 sets of 10 reps. "Using a stability ball forces you to work your entire middle much more than you otherwise would," says Whitmarsh.

For your lower abs:

Leg drops and hip lift Start lying on your back with your hands under your hips, shoulders on the floor, abs contracted and legs lifted straight up over hips. Inhale, then exhale while you slowly lower you legs to the floor. Inhale and bring your legs back to the starting position, then exhale and lift your hips off the ground, creating the pelvic tilt needed to work the lower part of your abs. Repeat for 2 to 3 sets of 10 reps.

—Marina Khidekel



Our expert panel



Nutritionist, author and speaker **Erin Palinski, R.D., L.D.N., C.D.N., C.P.T.**, founder of DietitianResource.com, has been featured in *The Chicago Tribune* and *Consumer Reports*.



Nationally recognized women's health expert **Genie James** is the executive director of The Natural Hormone Institute. She's the coauthor of *From Belly Fat to Belly Flat*, and her latest book is *In the Mood Again*.



ExerciseTV expert, licensed nutritionist and trainer **Cindy Whitmarsh** is the founder of Ultra-fit Nutrition Systems and the creator of the DVD *ExerciseTV Presents Incredible Abs*. She was also the featured nutritionist on the Style network show *Fat-Free Fiancés*.

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