

Weight loss for good

Fat information

We all know what it looks like from the outside but what is fat, how does it get into the body, and where is it stored? Read on for more information about fat.

Fats come directly from the food we eat, and are broken down in the digestive system by an enzyme called lipase and are then transported in the blood stream.

Both muscle and fat cells then absorb the digested fats and either burn the fat through activity, or store the fat for later use.

Fat Storage

Fat is found in several places throughout the body. The majority of fat is stored under the skin, and is known as subcutaneous tissue. The thickness of the subcutaneous fat varies from body area to body area. It tends to be thickest at the waist, and is practically non-existent at the eyelids.



As well as being a store of energy, fat also acts as a cushion to impacts.

Why we need fat?

Fat is needed as part of a healthy diet (just not too much of it!). Here are a couple of reasons why:

- Essential fatty acids have to be obtained from food as the body has no way of producing them internally.
- Certain vitamins are fat soluble, and eating fat is the only way to get these vitamins in to the body.
- Fat contains twice as many calories per gram as either proteins or carbohydrates, which makes fats an excellent source of energy. This is fine as long as that energy is being used up.

Main areas of fat storage

Women – Breasts, Hips, Waists, Buttocks

Men – Chest, Abdomen, Buttocks

When a person is overweight these fat deposits will start to clog the arteries which can lead to serious health problems such as a heart attack.

What are calories?

A calories is a unit of energy that is often associated with food and dieting. The definition of a calorie is 'the amount of energy, or heat, it takes to raise the temperature of 1 gram of water 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit)'. It is in effect the amount of potential energy that a food contains. The body uses this energy to live and breathe, and perform all our daily activities. The Basal Metabolic Rate has information on calories used just to stay alive. You can also calculate your BMR with the BMR Calculator.

How to lose weigh by calorie counting?

Firstly, use the 'Daily Calorie Intake Calculator' to see what your

daily intake is. The figure that you get is the amount of calories that you need to consume to stay at your current weight. The idea of calorie counting is becoming more aware of the calorific value of foods that you are eating and keeping the amount of calories you consume at a level lower than the amount of calories that you are burning during the day. If you have an unhealthy diet and are left with an excess of calories that are not being burned off then this excess energy is converted to Fat. The more calories - the more fat.

As a general rule, if you eat 500 calories less than you need each day you will lose weight at the rate of one pound per week. Combine eating less with an increase in exercise and daily activity and the deficit between calorie intake to calories burned increases. Have a look at the 'Calorie Calculator' to see how many calories you could lose by undertaking different exercises. The more of a deficit the quicker the weight loss. The great thing about calorie counting is that if you are eating sensibly you do not have to

leave anything out of your diet, as long as your calorie intake remains lower than your calories burned.

Basal Metabolic Rate

Your basal metabolic rate, or BMR, is the minimum calorific requirement needed to sustain life in a resting individual. It can be looked at as being the amount of energy (measured in calories) expended by the body to remain in bed asleep all day! BMR can be responsible for burning up to 70% of the total calories expended, but this figure varies due to different factors. Calories are burned by bodily processes such as respiration, the pumping of blood around the body and maintenance of body temperature. Obviously the body will burn more calories on top of those burned due to BMR.

Main factors affecting BMR

As we grow older, our BMR will steadily decrease. In youth, BMR is higher, and as we age we have less

lean body mass - slowing the BMR. The more lean tissue on the body, the higher the BMR, the more fatty body tissue, the lower the BMR. (This does mean that an individual can raise their basal metabolic rate by undertaking regular exercise). A person's height is also a factor, a tall thin person will have a higher BMR than a shorter, fatter person. BMR will increase in pregnant women.

Short-term factors affecting BMR

Illnesses such as a fever, high levels of stress hormones in the body and either an increase or decrease in the environmental temperature will result in an increase in BMR. Fasting, starving normal nutrition all result in a lowering of BMR. This lowering of BMR can be one side effect of following a diet and nothing else. Solely dieting, i.e. reducing the amount of calories the body takes on, will not be as affective as dieting and increased exercise. The negative effect of dieting on BMR can be offset with a positive effect from increased exercise.