

5 Foods to Flatten Your Abs

You bend and turn, twist and burn, all in an effort to lose that gut, but your pooch persists. But what can you do?

Look at the food you're feeding your body and replace some of the belly busters with slimming stomach staples (as in crucial diet ingredients, not invasive surgery fasteners). You know you can't eat 4,000 calories a day and get great abs, but it's not just about the calorie count when it comes to a flat stomach - it's also about the food.

"All things being equal, if your daily caloric intake is set at 1,400 calories, a diet of nutrient-rich foods is going to keep you fuller longer, reducing your cravings and giving you more energy, compared to the same number of calories of less nutritious food, which will help you on your road to a better body," says Tracey Ryan, MS, RD.

According to a report from the experts at Framingham Nutrition Studies, certain foods lend themselves to bigger bellies. The study reported that women who ate 400 fewer calories per day, but chose less nutritious foods than the participants that made better selections, had a higher risk of abdominal obesity by nearly 2 1/2 times. Those making poor food selections also had a higher risk of Type 2 diabetes and heart attacks according to the study's director of nutrition research.

The **five foods you'll need for flatter abs** will help you be healthier and leaner, plus, you'll be pleasantly surprised by some of the suggestions. Now start eating yourself skinny!

Orange you glad you get to eat carbs?

According to a recent review from Copenhagen University Hospital, the best way to whittle down your waist is to replace carbohydrates from sugar and refined grains (like white bread) with carbs from fruits and vegetables. Orange-hued foods were found to be the most effective substitutes.

Since fruits and vegetables are high in fiber, they keep you feeling full longer and researchers believe the high levels of antioxidants like vitamin C and beta-carotene fend off the belly fat. Get a good dose of beta-carotene from carrots, cantaloupe, squash and peaches. You can get your vitamin C from oranges and berries, but remember that fruit juice is not a good substitute for the real thing.

How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?

You should be getting about 25 percent of your daily calories from protein, Ryan suggests, but you should make sure to choose lean sources like low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, fish and poultry to keep calories down. Nuts are also high in protein, but can also be high in calories, so eat them in moderation. Tracey recommends roughly a handful a day.

Protein helps to keep you feeling full and **boost your energy** -- aiding in your weight-loss efforts. According to research from Skidmore College and Copenhagen University Hospital, eating additional protein is especially helpful for those over 40 in reducing abdominal fat.

Selenium: One marvelous mineral.

A recent survey of over 8,000 Americans found that this cancer-fighting mineral also seemed to lower rates of abdominal obesity, reporting that those with lower levels of selenium had larger waistlines.

Several foods contain selenium, so it's hard to know if you're getting your recommended 55 mcg per day. The best sources are whole grains, nuts (especially Brazil nuts), poultry, red meat and seafood. Foods rich in vitamin E, such as nuts and seeds, will increase the effectiveness of selenium in the body. Your best bet to get enough selenium is to eat a varied, balanced diet or try a supplement containing the mineral.

Booze it and lose it!

Could drinking possibly help you keep your middle little? Several studies suggest that light drinking, compared to tee totaling, protects against weight gain around the waistline in women. Data reviewed by the National Center for Health Statistics points to one 4-ounce glass of wine most days as the best bet.

The key to boozing and losing is the less is more philosophy. While one glass has great health benefits, having more is just going to add inches to your waist and cause you to think you're funnier, smarter and better looking than you really are. The only 6-pack you should be having is the one under your shirt.

Me and Fatty McGee: Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.

There's a difference between good and bad fats. Eating good fats like monounsaturated and omega-3s make it easier to stay slim, according to recent research.

"The healthy fats, like monounsaturated and polyunsaturated are found in fish, nuts, olive oil and avocado, while the bad fats, like saturated and trans are found in butter, shortening, pre-packaged cakes and cookies," Ryan says.

A Wake Forest University study found that over a 6-year period, participants whose only source of fat was trans-fats gained 30 percent more fat in their abdominal region and had early signs of diabetes. You don't have to fear fats if you know which are good and bad. Exercise and follow these simple guidelines and you'll be on your way to an absolutely amazing midsection!

