

How to Lose Stubborn Belly Fat

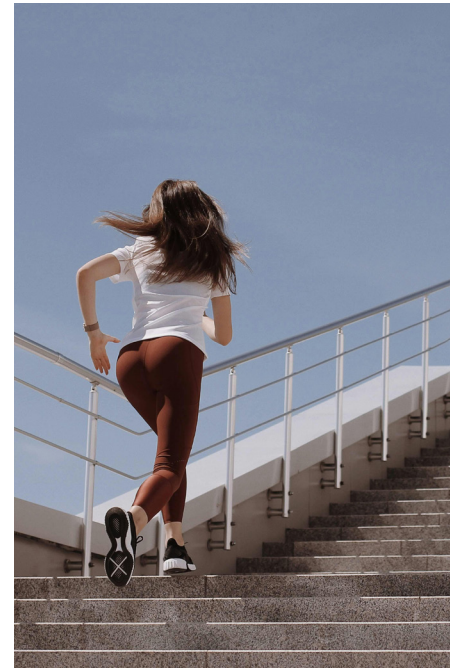
You cannot easily burn off a spare tire, aka visceral fat, with more exercise. Belly fat can linger because of deeply-rooted hormone dysregulation and chronically stressful lifestyle patterns. However, belly fat is more metabolically active than subcutaneous fat, so it can be burned off quickly and efficiently with the correct approach, focusing on the following:

- **Eliminate processed foods:** Consuming heavily processed, nutrient-deficient, chemical-laden foods prompts visceral fat accumulation, oxidative stress, and insulin resistance. Refined industrial seed oils (canola, corn, soybean, sunflower, safflower, etc.) and the many packaged, processed, frozen and fast foods made with them are the biggest offenders.
- **Eliminate or greatly reduce alcohol consumption:** They don't call it a "beer belly" for nothing! Alcohol calories are known as the "first to burn" because they must be metabolized immediately upon entering the bloodstream. This causes other calories (e.g., the sugar in margarita) to be removed from the bloodstream and stored as fat. Note this distinction from the popular but inaccurate notion that alcohol gets "converted" into fat. When the liver becomes overwhelmed with too much energy and/or toxins to process, visceral fat can accumulate in the liver and around abdominal organs.
- **Consume nutrient-dense foods:** When you consume exclusively wholesome, nutrient-dense foods, your natural appetite and satiety mechanisms guide you to consume the optimal amount of energy to truly thrive. Starvation diets can be counterproductive, as they drive stress hormone production and chronic inflammation, and trigger compensatory laziness and overeating. Strive to consume protein-rich, high-quality animal foods, along with sufficient natural, nutritious fats, and easy-to-digest carbohydrates (well-prepared plant foods, honey, fresh fruit, fermented foods) to fuel your active lifestyle. Eat at a leisurely pace in pleasant, low-stress circumstances to the point of satiety, and refrain from crash diets or extremes that become too stressful. Get metabolically healthy first, then worry about dropping excess fat.

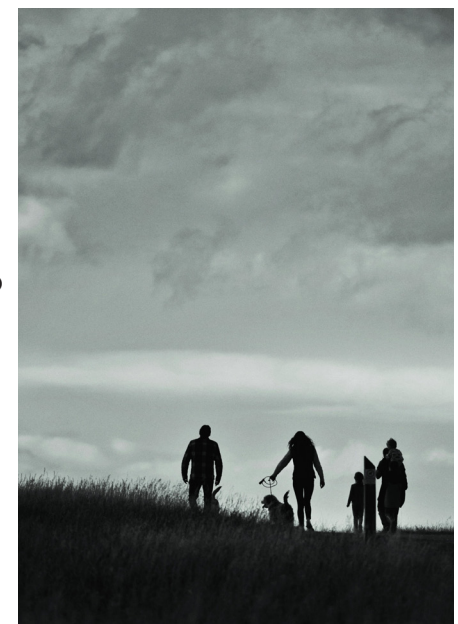


- **Slow down!:** If you are immersed in a chronic cardio or otherwise overly-stressful exercise pattern (e.g., chronic CrossFit, etc.), slow down and/or back off. Losing visceral fat is about managing the pre-eminent stress hormone cortisol that can run amok and drive inflammation, appetite dysregulation, and the preservation of visceral fat. Instead of being a sugar chomping, fat storing, inflamed, exhausted, chronic athlete, mix things up with a sensible, ancestral-inspired program that covers a broad-base of functional fitness objectives. You'll have more energy for everyday life and increase your overall fitness competency.

- **Go hard!:** From a foundation of extensive daily movement (and the efficient fat burning it hones), your body needs to be aggressively forced to leave its metabolic set point and reduce excess fat through brief, explosive high-intensity sprinting and strength training. Intense workouts send powerful genetic signals to build or maintain lean muscle and shed excess fat. Even doing a single sprint workout once every 7-10 days, consisting of 4-8 sprints of 10-20 seconds (with extensive rest between efforts) can improve fitness and body composition better than miles and miles on the road. You get appropriate fight or flight stimulation, followed by a quick return to homeostasis without the compensation factors like fatigue and increased appetite kicking in. Remember, it's not about the calorie burn during workouts, but rather the hormonal signaling prompted by your overall exercise program—ideally a mix of low-level movement, regular brief, intense resistance workouts, and occasional all-out sprints.



- **Prioritize sleep and down time:** Even mild sleep deprivation can throw your metabolic and endocrine hormones haywire and send you into a tailspin of inflammation, dysregulated appetite, and chronic stress hormone production. Resolve to minimize artificial light and digital stimulation after dark, and make your evenings quiet and mellow. Create a relaxing wind-down ritual where you end screen time early—walk the dog, take a bath, or do quiet reading instead. Create a sleep sanctuary that is completely dark (blackout curtains, no LED lights), cool (68F), uncluttered (no screens, work desk, or paperwork), simple and restful. Sleep hygiene is paramount, but we also have to include the critical obligation of creating down time in daily life. Resolve to get good at Mr. Rodgers-style transitions between the workday and leisure time. Learn to power down (or at least put down!) your mobile device and engage with nature or real humans.



- **Manage stress:** Chronic overproduction of stress hormones drives inflammation drives belly fat, so learning to disengage sympathetic (“fight or flight”) function and trigger parasympathetic (aka, “rest and digest”) function on demand will improve your metabolic and hormonal function. Sympathetic dominance prompts sugar cravings and glucose burning, while parasympathetic dominance is associated with fat burning. Walking helps trigger parasympathetic activity on demand—getting fresh air, open space, direct light and gentle locomotion will quickly transition your mind and body into a calmer disposition. Meditation is an excellent way to trigger parasympathetic function, as are formal movement practices such as yoga and tai chi, and self-care rituals like massage, acupuncture, sauna, hot spa, bubble bath, and so forth. Resist getting sucked into exhausting patterns of chronic stress that characterize modern life. Power down to avoid hyperconnectivity. Nurture gratitude and mindfulness exercises to counter the pressures of consumerism and FOMO.

