

# How to burn stomach fat

By Stuart Marsh | 5 days ago



It's the number one question that people have for health experts. (Image) iStock

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## It's the question every health expert never stops hearing: how do I transform a flabby gut into a chiselled masterpiece?

"Most of my clients ask me to reduce the size of their stomach area," IMG Models personal trainer [Ricardo Riskalla](#) tells Coach.

"It is the number one request for men and women."

So is it simply a case of doing a thousand crunches a day? Not quite, says Riskalla, because the key to tightening up that midsection all starts with what you put in your mouth.

### You need to get leaner all over - and that starts with diet

As wonderful as it would be to simply prod your belly and say "I'm going to lose fat from here", your body may have vastly different ideas.

It's pretty much impossible to "spot-reduce", or only remove fat from an area of your body that you decide. For some people, fat goes first from the face and legs - for others, it could be in the arms or around your neck.

What you can do, aside from swapping out your less-desirable genetics, is focus on getting leaner all over, and then looking at growing the muscles (like your abs) in the spots you really want to show off.

To do this, Riskalla recommends cleaning up your diet before you hit the gym, and concentrate on eating non-processed foods that are lower in calories.

"In order to get leaner all over it is a combination of 90 percent diet and 10 percent exercise," explains Riskalla.

"And when I say exercise for leaning up, I mean high repetitions with low weights or no weights used. Sometimes I exercise my clients' areas for five minutes non-stop to achieve the desired effects."

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### Ditch the restrictive eating plans

The science is pretty conclusive: diets don't work. [Research has shown](#) that while most dieters are able to lose five to 10 percent of their starting weight, as many as two-thirds end up regaining more than they originally had within five years.

This isn't because restricting calories help you lose weight - *it does* - it's just when most people think of a "diet" they think of something extreme, like eating two celery sticks a day or drinking [water laden with salt](#).

What does work, explains Riskalla, is finding a long-term approach that helps you reduce the total number of calories you consume every day without feeling like you'll throttle the next person in the office who mentions chocolate.

"To boost fat loss the best advice is to follow a diet that never ever makes you feel extremely full," says Riskalla.

"The Japanese island of Okinawa has the longest living people on the planet and they have a motto for it. They call it 'hara hachi bun me' that translates into: eat until you are 80 percent full."

"It is the most efficient form of portion control and the pivotal point of longevity."

### Sadly, you can't out-exercise that stomach fat

When it comes to burning belly fat, most people's first instinct is to train like every drop of sweat they emit earns them an extra dollar in the fitness kitty. After all, the logic makes sense: who's ever seen a fat marathon runner?

But while you may be tempted to spend hours on the treadmill or dedicate every day to lifting weights, it's probably not as effective for fat loss as you think.

"The most common mistake that people do when trying to lose their belly fat is to think that exercise is the solution," explains Riskalla.

"In reality a flat stomach has to do with low body fat percentage and that comes from the diet. Trying to exercise like crazy and not watching the diet is not the way to go."

As frustrating as it sounds, the key to turning that keg into a six-pack is all about [keeping consistent with your diet and training](#), and having the patience to wait it out over a couple of months for long-term, sustainable results.

Then, when you are lean enough to see the outline of those hard-earned abdominals, that's when you can focus on more specific stuff like water retention and bloating.

"The second most common mistake is to eat processed foods rich in sugar and salt," says Riskalla.

"That is a recipe for bloating and fluid retention, which will create the visual effect of big stomach."

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