



Losing Belly Fat

Belly fat, frequently in the news these days, has most recently been linked to increased risk of dementia and Alzheimer's. This is just one more link in the list of health problems associated with excess weight around the middle.

Just how does diet make a difference? Everything you eat impacts body chemistry. Some foods, like fruits, vegetables and whole grains, contain important nutrients that keep our bodies well tuned. These healthful carbohydrates, as well as lean proteins and healthy fats, have a role to play in decreasing inflammation and reducing belly fat.

Other foods can have a negative impact on body chemistry. Research suggests that insulin resistance is fueled by diets high in sugar and saturated or trans fats. Sugars and refined carbohydrates stimulate insulin production. Too much, too often, and coupled with inactivity, makes us less responsive to insulin: we need more and more to move the digested sugars from our blood and into our cells. It is this higher-than-usual level of circulating insulin that causes trouble.

Insulin resistance has been most strongly linked to heart disease and stroke. The inflammatory process triggered by insulin resistance increases the stickiness of platelets, which increases the risk of blood clots. It also has a connection to cancer: insulin acts as a growth hormone for cells, with the potential of prompting the quick growth of cancer cells.

Insulin is a key player in obesity because it causes the cells to store fat, primarily in the belly, rather than releasing it for fuel, even when calorie intake is restricted. This means that the kind of calories could be more important than the number of calories.

Lose belly fat with an anti-inflammatory diet. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Choose low fat protein foods and buy grass fed meats when possible. Use monounsaturated fats like olive and canola oil. Eat fish at least twice a week, and consider fish oil supplements (see my blog post for what to look for in the supplements: <http://tiny.cc/A8pr8>). Limit sugars and refined carbohydrates (wheat flour), trans fats, hydrogenated and saturated fats.



Be Wary of Health Claims

I recently saw a newsletter headline claiming that dark chocolate chips were the new health food. This makes me cringe: when something is a "health food," it gives the impression that this is a food you should eat lots of! Foods like dark chocolate and red wine can have health benefits *when used in moderation*.

Another health claim I recently ran across was in a magazine. It contained an article called "Healthy Living" that was a special promotion. Next to it was an ad for Frito Lay, showing a farmer carrying a bushel filled with bags of Frito's from a corn field (Frito's fresh from the field??!) The article contained mostly good information, but also claimed that you could still enjoy your favorite snacks because they no longer contain trans fats or hydrogenated oils.

Cookies and chips made with polyunsaturated oils *are* better than those made with trans fats - *but they are still cookies and chips*. They still have sugar or refined carbohydrates. They still have a lot of calories for a small amount of nutritional value.

Have you noticed how many products these days boast the addition of flax or omega-3's? While flax seeds and omega-3 fatty acids *are* good, when they are added to a product it is usually in an insignificant amount and often in a less potent form. When we add the flax seeds ourselves, we know how much we are getting; and we can make sure they are ground so that the omega-3 fats they contain are accessible.

As an example, Health Valley Golden Flax cereal is a reasonable choice with whole grains, 6 grams of fiber per serving and reasonably low sugar (9 gm). The label does not indicate the form of the flax, so I assume it is whole and would pass through your system undigested anyway. You would get value from the flax fiber but not the omega-3's. It is a healthy choice (although you can get healthy choices with less sugar) - but choose it because you like it and not for the flax!

Advertisers play on our desire to eat well, making it all the more important to choose wisely. One nutritionist I know says not to believe anything you read on the front of a package. Consider it marketing and read the ingredient list!

Seasonal Foods

Farmers Markets are opening! Visit one near you!

New PCC Certification

I am now certified with the International Coaches Federation (ICF). PCC refers to Professional Certified Coach. Even though my initial certification is from a highly respected school, all coaches are encouraged to become certified with the ICF as a way to ensure quality in the profession.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

