

BUSTED

Top 10 Fat Loss Myths

I get it, we all want abs. But with obesity rates over 42% in America (and rising every year), reducing body fat and improving body composition is critical to our health. To truly lose fat you're going to have to finally break free of fad diets, yo-yo dieting, and all the nutritional lies/myths that keep people overweight and frustrated. To be the master of your body you are going to have to first, debunk and correct what I consider to be 3 of the worst and most permeated fat loss myths and mistakes in the industry, and second, you need to master your mindset.

Myth #1

"CALORIES IN VERSUS CALORIES OUT DOESN'T MATTER"

Said another way, calorie counting doesn't work or dieting is all about food quality, not calories. It sounds great as a social media post, "Get lean and fit without ever having to worry about how much you eat"! This is not true and in fact it's a lie if anyone says something different. How much you eat or how many calories you eat is far more important than what you eat. There are multiple studies including University professor Mark Haub losing 27lbs in 10 weeks eating only junk food like hostess cupcakes, Doritos, Oreos, and supplementing with whey protein shakes. Of course I don't recommend eating this way because the nutritional value of your food does matter, but it proves the point that if calories are controlled, you can lose body fat and even gain muscle.

The key to understanding what really drives weight loss is energy balance. This is the relationship between energy

If you add up all the calories you ate in one day and then compared that to how many you burn in one day, one of three things will have happened:

1. You ate more calories than you burned (if this happens often enough you gain weight).
2. You ate fewer calories than you burned (if this happens often enough you lose weight).
3. You ate about the same amount of calories as you burned (if this happens often enough you maintain your weight).

My favorite analogy for calories in and out is your checking account, I call it a calorie budget. If you put more calories into your account (eat more) than you “spend” (burn), you will be saving energy (positive energy balance) or storing body fat. If you put fewer calories into your account than you spend, now you are creating a negative energy balance, and your body will have to use “savings” (body fat mostly) to make up for the deficit of energy and keep functioning. Every study ever done on metabolism has proven that energy balance is the basic mechanism that regulates weight gain and weight loss.

Action Step: You have to understand how calorie intake and expenditure dictates your body composition and then regulate your intake accordingly. This will require tracking every calorie that goes into your body either weighing your foods, using a container method, or the hand, palm, thumb method. Track it in an app like MyFitnessPal, a food journal, or even just taking pictures. BUT you have to commit to it, do it everyday and be honest with yourself.

MYTH #2

“CERTAIN PEOPLE JUST CAN’T LOSE WEIGHT”

What do you think is the biggest reason why people “inexplicably” can’t lose weight? Right, they are taking in too many calories whether they think so or not.

I’m not saying people do this on purpose because most people are really bad at estimating the actual calories they eat. I encounter this everyday when people weigh out protein or a “serving size” of nuts. People underestimate portion sizes, assume foods contain fewer calories than they do, inaccurately measure food intake, and unfortunately in some cases lie to themselves about how much they are really eating. I won’t go into any exact studies but from the ones I looked at, people were underestimating their calorie intake by as much as 2,000 calories per day, so if you think you're eating 1,000 calories a day and not losing weight let’s go back to the basics and get accurate with your measuring system.

Action Step: Learn how to measure the calories you are ingesting. I can teach you that system or start searching for videos that can teach you that system but make the effort to learn. It’s a challenge at first, it’s time consuming and like anything new, it can be hard. But look at it like an educational experience, learn from it everyday and start to see food differently. Now you can start to make small changes to get you moving in the right direction of your goals.

MYTH #3

"CARBS, ESPECIALLY SUGAR MAKES YOU FAT"

This one has really been perpetuated in social media and even by physicians that are influencers to thousands of people. Maybe this is because people love to have simple explanations for things and they make for compelling social media headlines. Hence the fad diet is born. Media and influencers pull on our emotional heart strings by making us the victim in a food conspiracy. Getting us to demonize fat in the 80s and 90s, and then renounce carbs as the latest villain standing between us and the body we have always wanted and deserve. If this is true then how does someone eat only twinkies, cupcakes and junk food and lose 27 pounds? How do multiple well designed studies that have been peer reviewed find no difference between low and high-carb and low and high sugar diets? When science repeatedly points to the fact that overall calorie control is the ultimate predictor of weight gain or loss (we aren't talking about health, just body composition) then how can we blame a single macronutrient for all our problems? I am making a point here to debunk this myth but I don't want to undervalue the quality of the food you eat. Quality matters for metabolic and hormone health! But let me ask you this, do you know someone who is always eating the "healthiest" foods on earth and still overweight? "Eating clean" doesn't always equate to a healthy body composition and on the flip side eating junk food all the time doesn't mean you will be overweight...enter the skinny fat person.

Action Step: Focus on Quantity first and a close second is the quality of the food you eat. Now that you are tracking your food, take notes on how certain carbs make you feel. Do oats make you tired and bloated, do peppers make you itchy, how do you feel after eating rice? This will tell you what carbs (and all foods for that matter) your body does well with and what foods to avoid. It's not the macronutrient, it's the quantity and the quality of the macronutrient. Time is your friend and consistency always wins in the long run so prepare your mindset for the long haul because this is your life, make it a lifestyle.

MYTH #4

“YOU ARE DIETING FOR TOO LONG”

Also known as staying in a calorie deficit. The myth here is that you can't keep eating less calories and lose weight. The body doesn't just stop losing weight because it's not getting enough calories (look at starving people around the world, they are very skinny), it only seems like that because our bodies don't want to keep losing weight. Subconsciously our bodies start to preserve energy with less non-exercise energy being expended, less energy going towards systems repair, and building/maintaining muscle. Therefore, when you stop losing weight for no apparent reason, or when you start gaining weight after a period of dieting, people will say you have metabolic damage that you need to repair.

Action Step: You need to periodize your nutrition. This means strict periods of trying to lose body fat and retain muscle followed by a period of increasing muscle and maintaining body fat. This looks different for everyone depending on many factors, however, it typically means 4 to 12 weeks of cutting followed by at least half that time in a maintenance phase then if you want to gain muscle, a 2-6 month gaining phase where you are in a slight calorie surplus. This is where an objective coach can figure all of this out for you and make it simple to implement.

MYTH #5

“YOUR BODY WILL GO INTO STARVATION MODE”

I couldn't find any real science behind this and when it's talked about, it's usually stories of people not losing weight on less than 1,000 calories a day while doing intense cardio routines. This leads to people becoming convinced that dieting has screwed up their body and the only way to fix it is with a special diet (insert marketing scheme). Several studies have shown that metabolic decline associated with dieting, including long periods of very low calorie dieting, was at the most 15%. Furthermore, it took at least a 10% drop in body weight under extreme conditions to produce the double digit decline in metabolic rate. In other words, severe calorie restriction (greater than 50%) for months.

Action Step: When you are in an aggressive calorie deficit of 15-25% below maintenance you will be losing 1-1.5% of your body weight per week. If you follow a periodized schedule then you can predict how much weight you will lose in a given period of time. It's not easy but it can be very predictable and very safe.

MYTH #6

“YOU HAVE TO SPEND HOURS IN THE GYM DOING ENDLESS CARDIO TO LOSE WEIGHT”

People make the dieting mistake trifecta of eating too few calories, too little protein, and not doing any resistance training to build muscle. Muscle is the most important metabolic tissue in your body! It stores energy, costs a lot of energy to maintain and when you do resistance training it puts you in an energy deficit for 12-24 hours. When you do “cardio” like running, elliptical, biking, swimming, etc...you are only burning calories during the exercise and muscle will get sacrificed because it’s too expensive to maintain. So yes, metabolic adaptations happen as you diet because our bodies are smart and they want to preserve body fat and yes, they can persist long after weight loss has stopped but they can also easily be mitigated or eliminated by raising your calories to maintenance for short periods of time with nutritional periodization, lifting weights, and eating adequate amounts of protein. This applies to everyone, even if you have gone to extreme measures in the past to get lean. No matter what you have done, if you start doing things correctly, research shows you can even improve your metabolism over time and keep losing body fat.

Action Item: Find your maintenance calories and be honest with yourself. Really track every calorie over 7-10 days and get a calorie budget as well as a macronutrient profile. To lose body fat, adjust your calorie budget down 10-15%, keeping your protein at 1-1.2g/lb of body weight or goal body weight but lower your carbs and fats. Do 3-5 days a week of resistance training, 90-180 minutes of zone II cardio a week, and 7-9 hours of quality sleep every night.

MYTH #7

“YOU CAN’T GET THE BODY YOU WANT BECAUSE OF YOUR GENETICS”

Most people work endlessly to get rid of their belly fat, jiggly arms and slim down their thighs BUT can you really reduce fat from the places where you don’t want it? Do your genetics determine your body composition success? The short answer is NO, only 25% of your body composition and overall physique is determined by your genetics. That means you control 75% of your health, body composition, and overall physique. That 75% is where lifestyle, habits and hard work are the major determining factors. Live a healthy lifestyle and the side effects will be a healthy body composition, healthy metabolism and the physique you want.

Action Item: Building the physique you want takes hard work and dedication. Following a well designed strength and conditioning program along with eating about 1g/lb of body weight in protein and just enough carbs and fats to support your lifestyle and exercise.

MYTH #8

“YOU CAN SPOT REDUCE BODY FAT”

If you read the magazines, scroll social media, and try endless core workouts to spot reduce your belly fat, then you are brainwashed into thinking you can spot reduce fat from the places you don't want it. You can't slim your thighs, eliminate back fat or make your jiggly arms toned by just working that underlying body part. Yes, you will bring blood flow to that part of your body and grow the muscle but fat loss is a whole-body experience that involves multiple moving parts. Once you create the proper environment through diet, exercise and lifestyle (calorie deficit), then your body starts reducing fat stores all over. The general rule is you lose fat in the last place you put it on first and lose it in the first place you put it on last.

Action Item: If you are a man getting to 10-12% body fat will reveal abs and if you're a woman getting to 16-18% body fat will reveal abs. Genetics does play a role here but my point is that muscle can only be seen once the body fat gets low enough to reveal it. If you want to have a great butt, abs and obliques, and ripped arms, keep lifting AND lose body fat to reveal all your hard work.

MYTH #9

“BODY TYPE DETERMINES YOUR FAT LOSS”

Our genetics only determine about 25% of our body composition, so if you are 5' tall and want to see abs you can do it. Genetics is going to determine how much effort it's going to take and how dialed in your behaviors have to be in order to reach this goal. Yes, abs will come easy for one person and be a challenge for another but they are always possible. Genetics determine things like height, hair color and skin tone BUT your lifestyle and behaviors determine your body composition and physique.

Action Item: Be honest with yourself, if you are a 5' tall woman, maintaining 12% body fat and having ripped abs is going to take 100% dedication to your lifestyle and habits. The see people get disappointed when the reality of what they are doing and their expectation of what is going to happen are misaligned. If you have realistic expectations and the behaviors to match, you can achieve any body composition.

MYTH #10

“YOU CAN TONE YOUR MUSCLES”

No amount of crunches will give you abs if your body fat percentage is 25 or 30%. Toning muscle comes down to losing body fat and building or maintaining muscle. As you lose more body fat and gain/maintain more muscle, you see more muscle, this is what toning really means. Your genetics determine what body fat % you have to get down to in order to see muscle tone but it's generally under 14% for men to see abs, separation of muscle groups and major veins. For women it's generally under 20% to see abs and usually mid teens to see muscle groups and veins. If you are strength training and in these percentages you will have great definition!

Action Item: Dial in your behaviors to match your goals. Have a well designed plan that you can pivot on if needed. Even better, use the expertise of a coach to help you dial in what matters most and help you make it a lifestyle, then enjoy the process.

In conclusion, our body is smart, it will do what it needs to in order to preserve health whether we are abusing it by eating poorly, eating too much and not moving OR under-eating, doing the wrong kind of exercise, and not getting enough protein. The formula doesn't change, to lose fat you have to be in a calorie deficit first and foremost. Resistance training, eating enough protein, and drinking enough water all expedite the process and will keep your metabolism healthy and efficient. The bottom line is the healthier you are, the more muscle you have and the less body fat you have, the more efficient your metabolism will become. More efficiency technically means slower so don't make your goal to “speed up” your metabolism, make your goal to maximize your metabolism's efficiency because that means you are healthy and fit.

If you want a more indepth look at my top 10 myths, just follow the links below.

- <https://www.nutrition1stcoaching.com/post/dispelling-the-10-worst-and-most-prevalent-fat-loss-myths-and-mistakes-part-i>
- <https://www.nutrition1stcoaching.com/post/dispelling-the-10-worst-and-most-prevalent-fat-loss-myths-and-mistakes-part-ii>
- <https://www.nutrition1stcoaching.com/post/dispelling-the-10-worst-and-most-prevalent-fat-loss-myths-and-mistakes-part-iii>

~Coach Brant