



Big Bad Belly

For both male and female executives it may seem like weight gain is inevitable especially with conferences accompanied by catered lunches, dinner meetings, and cocktail gatherings. Stress and a lack of sleep also add to a growing middle with accumulation of the hormone cortisol – which not only can be a cause of belly fat but also make fat cells larger. Worst for most people, the weight seems to accumulate around the belly.

There are three basic reasons why excess calories are stored as fat around your midsection- which includes hips and buttocks. One is biomechanics. Because fat storage is for survival, the body stores fat in the most energy efficient location – our midsection. It's the best place to store extra energy because it takes less energy to carry it around. Your body also stores fat wherever there are fat cells. Unfortunately, once a fat cell exceeds its normal size it secretes excessive substances that will increase your weight and compound health issues. More frustrating is that large fat cells can cause more fat cells to be created.

Finally, there is an anthropological angle. Like other animals, our bodies are designed to attract mates. For women, fat stored in the hips, buttocks and breasts often creates a more attractive physique, showing her health and ability to bear children.

Although we don't plan where our fat goes, we now know that people who gain belly fat are at a far greater risk of serious health problems. We also know that men are more likely than women to gain weight around the waist. And a large amount of belly fat increases the risk of everything from cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes to insulin resistance and stroke. For women there are additional risks of breast cancer and gallbladder disease.

If you have belly fat – how do you get rid of it?

Belly fat diets are the latest trend, and many contain good recommendations such as increasing healthy monounsaturated fats and cutting out sugary and processed foods. While a well-balanced diet full of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and nuts is an excellent approach, there is no magic formula. To reduce body fat, including belly fat, calorie input must be less than calorie output. And just as your body decides where to store fat, it will also decide where fat is used first. For women, this means the last place for fat to go is usually on the hips and buttocks. For men, generally the last place is the



belly. Consuming fewer calories isn't the only component of the solution. Exercise, especially strength and weight circuit training will help build more muscle which in turn will burn more calories – even hours or days after finishing the work out.

If you are struggling with belly fat or other weight issues, see your doctor at Executive MD for a complete nutritional and weight loss program customized for your needs.

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