

FAT FACTS

Your body is composed of lean weight and fat weight. Lean weight consists of muscles, bones and internal organs. Fat weight is merely fat. The recommended percentage of body fat is approximately 18 to 22 percent for women and 11 to 15 percent for men. If you have more body fat than the recommended amount, you increase factors associated with heart disease.

Some important concepts you should know concerning fat and fitness are:

1. There is absolutely no way you can 'spot reduce'. Because fat concentrates in specific areas of the body, most people think excessive exercising of those areas will get rid of the fat. **WRONG!!** A fat pad does not belong to the particular muscle underneath it. Your muscles contain intramuscular fat, but excessive subcutaneous fat belongs to your whole body and you store it for use as fuel when needed. Your body burns carbohydrates for approximately the first 15 minutes of an aerobic activity because carbohydrates are efficient, readily available, and stored in your muscles. After the first 15 minutes, a combination of carbohydrates and fat are being metabolized as energy sources. If exercise continues for 30 minutes or longer, fat provides most of the fuel supply. When fat is mobilized into the blood stream, it is withdrawn randomly from permanent storage areas (fat pads). However, usually you will notice a reduction in the least dense fat pads first, such as the face and chest. So, by working aerobically 30 minutes or longer and within your training zone, you will burn unwanted body fat in the most sound physiological way.
2. You cannot reduce the number of fat cells your adult body contains. When you lose fat, you will have smaller, not fewer fat cells.
3. The more lean muscles tissue you have, the easier it will be to keep your percentage of body fat down. Exercise maximizes fat loss. Dieting maximizes loss of lean tissue, which is desirable. Also, fat lost through exercise tends to stay off longer than fat lost by dieting alone. Combining exercise with sensible eating habits is the best method to lose fat. Done together, exercising and dieting are much more effective than either one done separately.
4. Fat and muscle are two different types of tissue. You cannot change one into the other, but you can certainly replace one with the other, especially within the muscles. When you become less active, intramuscular fat replaces muscle tissue as the muscle atrophies from tissue. Conversely, if you become more active by beginning an exercise program, you replace intramuscular fat with lean tissue. This lean muscular tissue is more dense (3 times) than fat and consequently you sometimes gain weight while you are losing fat! Beware.... muscles can hold just so much fat, then the excess is stored in the subcutaneous fat pads. Adding to your fat pads is not a replacement, only an addition!
5. If more calories are consumed daily than are burned, you gain weight. All unused calories are stored in your fat cells regardless of their original source: carbohydrate, protein, or fat.
6. Height-weight charts are of little value. You cannot realistically determine how fat you are by your weight alone. A more accurate indicator of body composition is having your body fat percentage measured. People who are just beginning to get overweight are usually already over-fat.
7. Fraudulent advertisements for particular machines and equipment promise rapid weight loss. A roller machine at your favorite health spa does not break up and disperse fat. These work only to make money for the manufacturers! One of the most dangerous devices is the plastic or rubber sweatsuit. Wearing this while exercising increases the body core temperature, increases water loss (temporarily), decreases stamina and in hot weather can lead to heat exhaustion or a fatal heat stroke.
8. There is no quick way to lose large amounts of fat, except by surgery. No more than 2 pounds a week is recommended by most doctors. Diet and exercise programs that cause you to lose more than this are not healthful.
9. Exercise causes greater caloric expenditure both during the activity and for six to eight hours after exercise ends. This is known as "after burn" and is due to an increase in metabolic rate.

