



HOW TO
FLATTEN YOUR
STOMACH,
SCULPT
YOUR ABS
AND LOOK
GOOD NAKED

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The First Step to a New You

For most people starting (or most likely re-starting) a health and fitness program, one of the #1 goals is to lose belly fat. If you can learn how to flatten your stomach, you can get the definition you've always wanted so that you can finally feel confident in a bathing suit at the beach.

Sculpting your abs will take some work on your part, but with an intricate approach using targeted diet and fitness techniques, there is absolutely no reason you cannot see success. The main thing you need to reach your goals isn't a magic pill or miracle workout; it's motivation, pure and simple.

The reason why many people don't get the results they're after when it comes to sculpting their abs is because they're taking the wrong approach. They go into the gym and perform ab crunch after crunch, never seeing improvement in their stomach's appearance. Once their minimal progress plateaus, they're left unmotivated to keep up.

Today, you can say goodbye to wasted effort in the gym once and for all.

In this guide, you'll learn the ins and outs of developing superior muscle definition and getting the lean figure you want to see in the mirror.

By the time you're finished reading this, you'll understand where you've gone wrong in the past and what must change moving forward for you to see faster results than ever before.

Let's get started with the key weight-loss principles you need to know.

Weight-Loss Basics

First things first, you need to understand what it's going to take for you to lose weight. When it comes to seeing more abdominal muscle definition, you need to focus on lowering fat percentage all over.

This is the biggest problem with the general weight-loss approach. Lots of gym-goers figure they can spot tone their abs, and they spend all their time doing targeted abdominal exercises.

Sadly, this thinking is flawed as you can't pick and choose which areas of your body you want to lose fat from. Often what's best for your midsection aren't basic sit-ups but movements that works several areas of the body at once.

That's right: You must lose fat all over the body to get that leaner mid-section, and there's no way to cheat around that fact.

Your primary objective is to burn up more energy over the course of the day compared to what you take in through every bite of food you've eaten – and don't forget to count beverages too.

If you consume less energy than you need to function, you're creating a calorie deficit. This means that your body is going to have to find an alternative source of fuel to use, hopefully your body's fat stores.

Flip the equation, though, taking in more calories than you burn off daily due to overconsumption and lack of exercise, and you will gain body fat. A calorie surplus – consuming more energy than you burn – will more often than not lead you to be looking in the mirror, wondering how you can lose excess fat from your arms, thighs and mid-section.

Weight-loss hinges on two main steps:

- Reduce calorie intake by choosing smarter foods and watching portion sizes
- Increase activity level to burn more calories each day

If you want to supercharge your results, you can add a third objective to that list: increase your basal metabolic rate (BMR). That means you'll change how many calories your body burns at rest every single minute of the day. This is the best way to see fat loss because you will essentially be turning your body into a 24/7 fat-burning engine. This can be accomplished by selecting your workouts and food choices very carefully (hang on for more details in the next chapter).

When you can get all three of these things in order, you will be on the way to seeing not only a leaner mid-section, but more muscle definition all over your body.

The end result will be a brand new you.

Calories and Why They Count

Weight loss is very much a scientific process. Burn more calories than you eat; lose fat. It's really that simple.

But when you think of calorie counting, what comes to mind?

- Deprivation
- Confusing calculations
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Hunger

Calorie counting has been widely associated with dieting, and as such, most people view it as something that's tedious, aggravating and definitely to be avoided.

But the fact of the matter is that if you want to get flat abs and see weight drop off, counting calories is a must. It's the best way to be accountable for eating less calories than you burn, and it's the most accurate means of tracking progress.

As with all scientific processes, the more you can quantify your variables, the better you will do. When you know precisely how many calories you're taking in and can get a

good approximation for how many calories you're burning off, then you can easily tilt the scales in your favor.

And if it doesn't? Then fixing your weight-loss hurdle is simple – reduce your calorie intake further, or increase your calorie expenditure.

Without measuring your calories, however, you'll never know precisely what steps you're taking to create the calorie deficit necessary for fat loss to occur. In other words, you'll have no idea what's working versus what's still holding you back. That's the path to a plateau.

Think back to all those frustrating times you may have experienced in the past where it felt like you were doing everything right in your diet or exercise program but you were still not losing fat. Were you counting calories? If not, you have no way of knowing just how well you were actually following that plan.

Monitoring food intake is essential for success. There is no getting around this.

Fortunately, in today's times it's not all that hard to monitor and count your calories. With simple technological tools, it doesn't take anywhere near the amount of work that it did in the past. You won't even have to use a calculator or tally grams of fat.

The three main ways to count calories include:

- A smartphone app
- An online program (web app)
- Diet journal with calorie count templates

The first two methods are the fastest and easiest because all the calculations are done by the program. Many of the smartphone apps also have a barcode scanner and extensive food database to effortlessly pull up and add the foods you're eating, even in popular restaurants. You can also calculate recipes from scratch in just a few minutes by listing the ingredients, and the nutrition facts will be saved for next time you make that dish.

If you install an app on your phone or access a tracker online, you simply have to input what you eat and how much for each meal of the day and before you turn in for the night, you will know your daily totals. They can even put the data into a graph to help you visualize your progress.

But how do you calculate how many calories you need? That's where BMR comes into the picture.

Calculating Your BMR

When it comes to calculating your calorie requirements, there are a few things to take into account. The biggest thing to understand is how many calories you need per day – and you definitely can't rely on the standard 2,000 calorie per day diet recommended on nutrition labels.

Instead, calculate your basal metabolic rate (BMR). This is going to be the total number of calories that you would burn off on a daily basis if you did nothing but lie in bed all day long without moving.

It's the amount of energy that is required in order to keep your heart beating, your brain functioning, your lungs taking in oxygen, and so on. Basically, your BMR is how much energy you require at a minimum to stay alive.

Many factors can influence your basal metabolic rate. These include:

- Your age
- Your body fat percentage
- Your lean muscle mass development
- Your current health
- Your dietary composition
- Your stress levels
- Your sleep status
- The temperature of your environment

As you can see, there are quite a few things that factor in; however, BMR does tend to be relatively stable from individual to individual given body weight, height and body fat percentage are taken into account.

BMR Formulas

If you aren't sure what your body fat percentage is, then you should use the following equation to calculate your BMR:

Discover the 7 foods that kill abdominal fat, revealing a flatter stomach:
<http://www.betteryoubydesign.com/go/3weekdiet>

- Women: $BMR = 655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in pounds} / 2.2) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches} / 2.54) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$
- Men: $BMR = 66 + (6.23 \times \text{weight in pounds} / 2.2) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches} / 2.54) - (6.8 \times \text{age in year})$

If you do know your body fat percentage, then the following equation can be used, the results of which will be slightly more accurate:

- Lean Body Mass = $[(100 - \text{body fat percentage}) / 100] \times \text{body weight} \times 10$

Since fat tissue doesn't burn as many calories at rest as muscle tissue, the more lean muscle mass you have, the more calories you will burn as a baseline. This is factored into the second equation, but not considered in the first.

Your Daily Caloric Needs

Once you have your BMR figured out, then you can take it as a baseline to figure out how many calories you need on a daily basis to maintain your current weight. You'll add a different amount depending on how many movements you make throughout a typical day.

Since you are probably not spending a large part of the day lying in bed perfectly still, your daily caloric needs will be quite a bit higher than your BMR. Even sitting at your desk typing will burn more calories than being fully at rest.

Pick a multiplier to use depending on your standard level of activity:

- If you are sedentary (little or no exercise): $BMR \times 1.2$
- If you are lightly active (light exercise/sports 1–3 days/week) = $BMR \times 1.375$
- If you are moderately active (moderate exercise/sports 3–5 days/week, or work a lightly physical job like retail) = $BMR \times 1.55$
- If you are very active (hard exercise/sports 6–7 days a week, or work a very physical job like construction) = $BMR \times 1.725$
- If you are extra active (very hard exercise/sports & physical job) = $BMR \times 1.9$

Now that you have number figured out, you'll have a good approximation of your total daily caloric burn. That means if you took in this exact number of calories every day, you would maintain your body weight without altering your activity level.

Since your goal here however isn't to just maintain your body weight – you want to lose stored fat – you need to take your calorie intake lower than that.

To lose one pound of body fat, you need to create a calorie deficit of 3500 calories.

This means you should:

- Reduce your daily intake by 250 calories to lose half a pound of fat per week
- Reduce your daily intake by 500 calories to lose one pound of fat per week
- Reduce your daily intake by 1000 calories to lose two pounds of fat per week

Note, however, that *only those who have 50+ pounds to lose should use the 1000-calorie deficit*. For everyone else, this tends to be far too severe and can result in a slowed metabolic rate, not to mention nutritional deficiencies.

In general, it's recommended that women eat a minimum of 1200 calories per day, whereas men should eat closer to 1500 per day. That's because a man's BMR will be higher than that of a woman who's the same height, weight and age. (It may not be fair, but it's true.)

Keep in mind that these numbers are always just approximates. You may have a faster than normal metabolism, which wasn't taken into account by those equations, leaving you absolutely famished and feeling weak by the end of every day. If so, add 100 calories per day, or recalculate your daily caloric needs at the next highest activity level.

It's important that you listen to your body, measure your progress by counting calories and taking measurements, and make adjustments to your food targets every two weeks or so.

Through trial and error, you can find the right intake to lead to your intended results in a steady, healthy manner. And after you hit your weight-loss goal, you'll always have a good idea of how many calories equals undereating or overeating for you.

The 80/20 Rule

When it comes to achieving fat-loss results, there is absolutely no way of getting around one essential truth: The primary determinant of your progress is your diet plan.

Far too many people get stuck on the idea that as long as they are exercising, they don't have to watch what they are eating as carefully.

These people are going to be very disappointed in the results they see.

Let's say Susan goes into the gym five days a week and burns off 500 calories per workout. This means she is creating a deficit of 2500 calories over the course of the week. That sounds pretty good, right?

Susan loves to eat, however, and isn't watching her diet all that carefully. She figures that since she is so active, she can afford to indulge a little here and there. But since she isn't counting calories or keeping a food journal, she's actually giving in to temptation more than she thinks.

Over the course of the week, she eats:

- A large bagel with 2 Tbsp. cream cheese as a snack after a hard workout (500 calories)
- A slice of cheesecake at lunch out with a colleague (800 calories)
- 2 large cocktails during Friday night out with the girls (600 calories)
- A large fruit smoothie when she running afternoon errands (400 calories)
- Steak with a loaded baked potato on date night with her husband (1000 calories)

If you add all of these up, they total 3300 calories.

She has completely undone those workouts with a few indulgences, and altogether Susan's treats to herself contributed more calories to her diet than she burned off through all her workouts.

So at the end of the week, she could actually *gain body fat* despite her diligence in the gym. And that's considering that Susan ate the right portion sizes of healthy foods at every other meal that week!

If you stop and really think about how much exercise you have to do to burn off a few poor food choices, it becomes quite clear that you are never going to do that much exercise in an average week unless you're an athlete. Not only is there no time to spare in most people's schedules, but too much exercise can also lead to burn out or repetitive stress injuries.

There is no way to overcome a bad diet with exercise alone. That type of calorie deficit simply can't be kept up in the long term, meaning if you lose weight, you'll eventually gain it back.

It is far easier to make a few smart adjustments to your food intake to create the calorie deficit you need for fat loss to take place.

This isn't to say exercise isn't important – just that you will get far faster results by watching your diet than by adding loads of exercise to your routine.

That brings us to the 80/20 rule:

80% of the results you see will be thanks to your diet plan.

20% of your results will be because of working out.

If you can keep this in mind as you go about your fat-loss program, you are going to see far better overall results, and it'll be a lot easier to stay motivated at mealtime.

But if it all comes down to calories in, calories out, does that mean convenience foods are still on the table? Dieting is never that easy.

Protein Shakes and Bars – A Help or a Hindrance?

If you've been reading about how to lose fat and build muscle, two products you'll come across are protein shakes and protein bars. Both of these contain protein powders, which can be derived from dairy, eggs, hemp, rice or vegetables like peas.

These are often marketed as a fast way to help you burn fat or add lean muscle mass to your frame, taking you closer to your dream of rock-hard abs. But, are these quick fixes really going to fill you up and get you closer to your goals?

Protein Shakes

The term protein shake tends to make people picture a muscle-bound man stirring powder into water and gulping it down after throwing weights around in the gym. As such, protein shakes are often associated only with men who want to build muscle mass to large proportions, and many dieters, especially women, shy away from them completely.

The fact of the matter is that anyone can get a much-needed nutritional boost from protein shakes, and females can actually stand to benefit the most.

Protein powders can be consumed in much more appetizing ways too – blend it with fruit for a smoothie, stir it into oatmeal or yogurt, and use it in place of flour in pancakes and muffins.

The primary benefits of protein shakes include:

- Easily meet protein requirements, important for preserving lean muscle mass
- Reduce hunger since protein is more filling than fat and carbohydrates
- Quick and highly convenient, making it perfect for times when you can't cook
- Wide flavor selection, many of which can satisfy cravings for favorite foods

Protein shakes come in many different styles so selecting the right fit for your nutritional goals is important.

Whey isolate

Whey isolate protein powders are typically carb- and fat-free so they are only around 100 calories per serving (and contain around 23–25 grams of protein). Since whey is rapidly digested by the body, it's best consumed immediately after your workout when you want to get those amino acids to your muscle fibers in record time. These shakes support fast recovery and are ideally suited for anyone with fitness goals.

Casein

Casein protein, the other type derived from dairy, breaks down much more slowly in the body. It's a good option for the afternoon or right before bed to ensure you aren't losing any muscle mass overnight. Like whey, casein protein powders are typically low in both carbs and fats.

Meal replacement shake

Meal replacement shakes not only contain protein, but also carbohydrates and fats.

These shakes can be good for those with a busy schedule, but keep in mind that they won't be nearly as satisfying as eating a plate of chicken breast, brown rice and broccoli.

It's important when choosing a meal replacement shake that you seek out one that contains minimal added sugar. If the shake you're using has a high dose of sugar, you're going to find that you suffer from an energy high and low, which just leaves you feeling miserable and hungry for more carbohydrate-rich foods.

Read the ingredient panel of any meal replacement option carefully, and make sure the ingredients fit your diet. Also avoid any shakes that are higher than around 300 calories, or it can make it tough to maintain the reduced-calorie intake you need for weight loss.

Weight gainer shake

Finally, the last type of protein shake that you may run into is designed for gaining weight. For obvious reasons, you'll want to avoid these at all costs.

Weight gainer powders tend to be very high in calories and also contain a high dose of added sugars and sometimes even fats, and they are not going to support your best efforts to get flat abs.

These powders are typically used by active people who have abnormally high calorie requirements, most often males, and who are looking to build lean muscle mass. While it takes 3500 calories to gain or lose a pound of body fat, it'll take an excess 1500 calories to add on a pound of muscle.

Men who have ectomorph body types (that is to say they struggle very much to gain any weight at all) will benefit most from these weight gainer products because, without them, they often can't take in enough calories.

For everyone else, though, these products are not going to be ideal for results.

Protein Bars

Protein bars are promoted as best to eat after a workout, especially when following a strength-training program, but they can also be a fast and convenient way for anyone to get protein as a snack.

It's quite common to find that you just aren't as filled up after drinking a protein shake compared to eating solid food, so if you drink a one and are still hungry, chances are you'll still have a full meal or snack after that. This pattern defeats the purpose of a protein-packed meal replacement.

Since you get that solid source of food in a protein bar, you may think it's the better option.

Only in most cases, that's unfortunately not true.

The real problem with protein bars is that while they do contain some protein, they also contain a high amount of added sugar, 20 grams or more – as much as a regular candy bar!

Because of this, most protein bars will spike blood glucose levels up higher, which means that you experience a surge of energy, followed closely by a crash.

If you crash after eating a protein bar, you'll be left feeling hungry, irritable and unwell. Typically, this will also drive you to consume more food – often in the form of more simple sugars.

This cycle is definitely not going to support your goal to get a lean stomach and burn body fat so you'll be setting yourself back if you fall into this sugary trap.

Another big problem with protein bars is they are often very high in total calories, easily containing 300 or 400 calories per bar. Even though they are solid food, they simply aren't as filling as 300 calories of juicy lean chicken breast and roasted sweet potatoes.

Think of a protein bar, in most cases, as a glorified chocolate bar. While there are a few protein bars that contain much less sugar and are lower in calories, they are far from the standard. And the more nutritious bars often come with a hefty price tag.

Furthermore, the protein bars that are marketed to be low-carb or low in sugar often contain high amounts of sugar alcohols, which are going to do just as much harm. These sugar alcohols can cause a high amount of gastrointestinal distress, which can then lead to bloating, cramps, diarrhea and other unpleasant side effects.

All in all, you should just avoid protein bars. If you feel like you need a portable snack to take with you when you go off to work or train at the gym, prepare your own protein bars or muffins instead.

Use wholesome ingredients such as raw oats, natural nut butters, seeds and dried fruit along with a casein or whey protein powder. In many cases it takes only a half hour to make a large batch of protein-packed snacks.

For anyone who is constantly on the go, having a quality protein product on hand can definitely make it easier to get the nutrients you need and stick to your diet plan.

5 Foods That Burn Belly Fat

If you want to see incredible fat loss, one thing that you need to be paying attention to at all times is the food you're choosing to eat.

We've already discussed the 80/20 rule and how diet is the single most important determinant for seeing maximum results from your fat-loss program.

In order to make sure that you are getting your diet in line with your goals, it's going to be important that you're filling your belly with nothing but the best ingredients.

When selecting the foods to make up your diet, you should look for three main things:

- Foods that are in their most natural state – that is, with the least amount of total processing or additives
- Foods that are lower in calories for the serving sizes being given (note that the exceptions to this rule are healthy fats, which will always be high in calories)
- Foods that provide a wealth of nutrients so that you stay healthy while you lose body fat

If you can make sure the main foods you select for your diet satisfy these requirements, you will be well on your way to success.

Let's get you started with five foods you should be eating regularly.

Salmon

Salmon is such a great choice because it is not only rich in protein but in high-quality omega fats, which are necessary to maintain a lean body, reduce your risk of disease and enhance your mental function, along with a wealth of other benefits.

Egg Whites

Egg whites are a very high-volume source of lean protein, meaning you can eat a lot yet take in very few calories. This makes them ideal for anyone seeking to lose weight.

They are also very versatile. Since they can be prepared in a number of different ways, this helps you combat dietary boredom. Just be sure not to prepare your egg whites in a high amount of butter or oil!

Furthermore, egg whites are a relatively low-cost form of protein so are good for eating on a budget.

Berries

Berries are very high in dietary fiber content, rich in antioxidants and low in calories. Fiber is important for regulating blood sugar levels, decreasing hunger and preventing cardiovascular disease

A cup of berries contains anywhere from 5 to 10 grams of fiber, depending on the type, so they are a fast and naturally sweet way to get your fiber intake up.

Leafy Green Vegetables

You can eat virtually as much of these as you'd like without negative repercussions on your body weight because they are so low in calories. This makes leafy greens ideal for adding more bulk to your meals so it feels as though you're getting more food, even though your calorie intake is hardly increasing.

Furthermore, leafy green vegetables are nutrient powerhouses, providing a number of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, helping you improve your overall health as you see the weight come off.

Just as with egg whites, though, be sure that you don't cook these in butter, cheese or high-calorie sauces.

Walnuts

All nuts tend to be a good choice on a fat-loss eating plan, but walnuts in particular are rich in omega fats. Adding nuts to your diet tends to reduce your hunger between meals so you'll be less likely to snack when you shouldn't be.

The nice thing about walnuts and other nuts is they offer some fiber and protein, making them easy to fit into a well-balanced diet. Always keep in mind that nuts are calorie-dense so you must make sure to moderate your serving size – only a handful or so. If you consume too many nuts on any given day, your calorie intake will quickly climb higher than your target.

Eat no more than 1/2 to 1 oz. per serving. This will help you control your calorie intake.

The 6 “Diet” Foods That Actually Make You Fat

Due to the fact that our population is becoming vastly overweight, clever marketers are starting to unleash a plethora of weight-loss products.

They come up with fat-free or reduced-calorie versions of classic high-fat foods, and dieters flock to them in a hurry, thinking they are going to help them see fast results without minimal lifestyle changes.

Be very careful about this labeling, however, because what is promoted to be weight-loss friendly is often a farce. There’s no magical ingredient or special food that tastes sinful yet helps you look like a super fit celeb.

Let’s take a look at some of the main foods that are often thought to be good for fat loss, but that really aren’t.

Breakfast Bars

These cereal and fruit-based bars may seem like a good choice on the run since they’re only around 130–200 calories per bar and are quite low in fat, but think again. If you eat one first thing in the morning, you may as well pencil in your mid-morning date with the vending machine.

Breakfast bars are very high in sugar and tend to contain almost no protein. The result? Your blood sugar levels will be soaring and then rapidly crashing. This will leave you feeling cranky, irritable and hungry for more.

Yogurt

Yogurt seems like a great dairy product because it’s low in fat, if not fat free. But check the sugar content! You’re easily looking at 20 grams for most flavored varieties – way too much added sugar to be eating in a snack.

The container may say that it contains real fruit, but don't be misled. Most of the sugar is in the syrup. Sugar-free varieties exist, but then these are going to have a high dose of artificial sweeteners added in, so they're almost as bad for you.

If you want to enjoy yogurt, cut out the extra ingredients and opt for plain Greek yogurt, which is naturally low in sugar and much higher in protein content.

Fruit Smoothies & Juice

You may think all fruit is a wise choice, but along with whole fruits smoothies also contain loads of flavored yogurt, sometimes even ice cream, and can get up to 400 calories per serving.

If you are having a smoothie to replace one of your meals, then make sure it contains at least 20 grams of protein (the amount in one scoop of most protein powders). It's best to prepare your own since you can control the ingredients.

But as a way to quench your thirst on a regular basis, liquefied fruit is not a viable weight-loss option. Stick to water.

Fruit juice also misleads many dieters. They think because it's essentially fruit, juice must be healthy. But, fruit juice lacks the dietary fiber that real fruit contains and also will contribute a significant number of calories to your diet.

A glass of orange juice is the equivalent of eating 2 or 3 oranges. Which would fill you up more? Clearly by that answer alone, the fruit juice is not a smart option.

Calorie-Controlled Frozen Dinners

These do contain just 250–350 calories in most cases, but the problem is that they're often still quite low in protein and lack dietary fiber.

Not to mention the fact that you don't get much food! When you're on a diet, the more volume you can eat in your meals while keeping calories low, the less hungry you will be. If you aren't constantly starving, that increases your chances of success.

Calorie-controlled frozen dinners just don't help you stay full. If you must eat these in your diet plan, then at the very least be sure to add some of your own diced vegetables to increase the dietary fiber and nutrient component while also adding more bulk.

Fat-Free/Reduced-Fat Chips & Crackers

These are not going to provide any sort of nutrients to the body. Despite the fact they may not be all that high in fat, with reduced-fat crackers you're putting empty calories into your body and getting nothing good out.

Whenever you're on a diet to lose weight, aim to consume as many natural foods as possible, which means choosing those that come straight from the source and are the least processed.

Unnaturally fat-free foods just don't fit this description. They are highly processed to take out the fat and calories, and they often have chemical-based ingredients, like artificial sugar, in place of the usual stuff. Plus, these foods won't be a smart solution since they are almost pure carbs.

Diet Soda

The problem with diet soda is that, even though it is calorie-free, it contains a high dose of added chemicals and artificial sweeteners.

These aren't going to do anything positive for your health, and the sweet taste of the diet soda may just encourage you to continually eat more and more sugary-tasting, high-calorie foods.

If you suffer from food cravings as it is, drinking diet soda on a regular basis is likely to only make those food cravings that much worse. Instead, you should be making an effort to drink pure water as often as possible, adding cups of green tea when you need something else.

The Importance of Sleep for Fat Loss and Muscle Gain

If you're like most people out there, you have a hard time finding eight hours to get a good night's rest.

You try and get by on five or six hours a night, going in for a good nine hours of sleep on the weekends to play catch up.

But, little did you know these poor sleep habits have a negative impact on your body fat.

Sleep is absolutely critical to your diet and exercise success, and if you aren't getting enough, you are going to pay the price.

Effects of not sleeping enough include:

- Difficulty controlling your hunger level, making it harder to maintain a reduced-calorie diet
- Poor insulin sensitivity – when you do consume carbohydrate-rich foods, they will be more likely to get stored as excess body fat
- Fatigue and sluggishness all day long, leading you to either miss a workout session or put in less than optimal effort and see a decline in performance
- Lower metabolic rate – burn fewer calories per day

All in all, if you aren't making the time to get enough sleep at night, you are not going to be reaping the most possible progress from all the effort you're exerting during the day.

Sleep is when your body repairs itself from stressors, especially your workout session. If you aren't sleeping enough, you won't be making a full recovery and will see lower fitness progress results as well.

When on a fat-loss program, you should aim for eight to nine hours of sleep each and every night without fail. Don't think you can just play catch-up on the weekend and be fine because that is not going to promote optimal results at all.

Start making sleep a top priority, and you will be happier, healthier and seeing faster fat loss because of all that beauty rest.

Flat Stomach, Sculpted Abs: How to Get Results

When it comes to sculpting your abs, there are two primary things that to focus on in your training:

- Intensity
- Instability

The intensity factor can be upped by decreasing the rest periods you're taking between the exercises that you perform. Also, integrate movements that require a high degree of total muscle contraction at once.

The instability component comes into play as you perform movements that place the body slightly off-balance. In doing so, you'll ensure that the muscles deep within the core have to contract harder than ever before, which increases the core muscle activation that you experience during each workout session.

The end result? Firmer, stronger abs in less time.

The key with your abdominal sculpting workout is to move through the series without taking much rest in between. Alternate between strength-focused core exercises and cardio movements that target the abs while burning up a great deal of calories.

If you perform this style of workout two to three times per week, making sure to take a day off between workouts, you will be on track to seeing increased definition taking place in your core. But keep in mind you can't see those core muscles if your body fat percentage is too high – reason enough to stick to those healthy eating habits!

Your 8-Minute Ab Sculpting Routine

Spend 1 minute on each exercise, 8 minutes total, and repeat this rotation once a day (minimum four times/week). If you need to, add a 30-second rest in the middle of the circuit. Aim to perform 15–25 reps per exercise before moving onto the next movement, but don't move so fast that you compromise your form or muscle engagement.

1. Running Knee Raises

You'll be running on the spot, but the focus is on feeling a crunch in your core. Activate those abs by bringing your knees up into the chest as high as possible. Visualize your knees reaching as high as your shoulders, and use your arm motions to get momentum.

2. Plank Hold

Choose to hold the top of a push-up position, or keep your body straight but drop down to your forearms. Hold for as long as you can, breaking the full minute into two or three reps, if necessary. Make sure your abs stay contracted the entire time by tucking your tailbone down toward the ground and pulling your ribs in toward your spine. Don't let your hips rise up, causing a bend at the waist, or fall down, creating an arch in your back.

3. Arm & Leg Raises

Start on all fours, hips directly over knees and shoulders above wrists. Raise one arm and the opposite leg at the same time, holding your limbs straight out, level with the ground and as high as possible. Slowly count to 3, lower, and repeat with the opposite arm and leg. Alternate for at least 10 reps on each side.

4. V-Ups

This is the toughest version of a sit-up so if you can only crunch up a few inches, don't worry! As long as you feel your core engage, you're doing this exercise right. Lay down on your back with legs and arms outstretched. Using only your ab muscles, lift your legs and arms simultaneously, keeping them straight. The goal is to form a V shape with your body, but only go as high as you can while remaining stable. Pause for a couple seconds, and then lower until your shoulder blades barely touch the ground. Repeat.

5. Mountain Climbers

Start in a plank position. Keep your body in a straight line as you pick up one foot and pull that knee into the chest. Kick it back out straight, simultaneously bending

the second leg up into the chest. Continue switching legs in this fashion for the full minute, moving as fast as possible.

6. Side Plank Lifts

These will tighten up your love handles in no time. Start lying down on one side, propped up on your forearm. Keep your arm perpendicular to your body at the shoulder. Place your other hand on your hip, and engage your obliques to raise your hips up off the floor. Pause before slowly lowering your hips back down. Do 5 reps, and then hold at the top position for 10–15 seconds. Increase difficulty by balancing on your flat hand instead of your forearm.

7. Burpees

This move has you in continuous motion from standing to a squat, followed by a push-up and a jump. First, crouch down to place your hands on the ground in front of you. From there, kick both legs back out to land in a plank. Perform a full push-up, jump your feet back up to a squat, and jump up as high off the floor as possible. Keep going through the series for a full minute.

8. Bicycle Crunches

Sit down, legs bent, feet flat on the floor. Interlace your fingers behind your head. Lean back about 45 degrees, pressing your lower back flat on the ground, if possible, and pick your legs up at an angle. As you engage your core to remain steady, move your feet in a circular motion as if pedaling a bike. For bonus points, twist your torso so your elbow touches the opposite knee as it comes toward your chest.

Remember to keep your breathing slow and steady as you move throughout this quick workout. And don't rest for more than a few seconds to ensure you make the most of these eight minutes each and every day. Once this ab routine begins to feel like a walk in the park, double it to two circuit rotations, about 15 minutes per day.

10 Critical Tips to Stay Motivated

Perhaps the most important ingredient for success is motivation. It's perfectly normal to see yours begin to wane as life gets busy, or as progress slows and your results aren't as obvious as they were in the beginning.

But, there are several techniques to help you stay motivated along the way to your target weight.

1. Get a workout buddy – Exercising in the company of others is more enjoyable than working out alone, and it will provide a sense of accountability. No one will be mad if you skip your solo morning run, but your friend won't be too happy if you fail to show up for a gym date.
2. Use a progress journal – Look back over the entire time you've been eating right and exercising regularly, and see without a doubt that you have made progress.
3. Take progress pictures – It's easy to exaggerate what you see in the mirror, but pictures will give you an accurate idea of where you started and how much closer you are getting to meeting your goals.
4. Plan out your meals for the week – When you have menus in place and the necessary ingredients in the fridge, it's much easier to eat as you should and not take a diet detour.
5. Hire a personal trainer – If you've become bored with your workout, a trainer can provide you with some new techniques. They can also kick your behind in gear on days when you're feeling sluggish or weak.
6. Get new workout music – Something as simple as an upbeat song can work wonders for enhancing your motivation and stamina.

7. Set daily goals – While having long-term goals is necessary, a daily goal gives each meal meaning and every workout purpose.
8. Sign up for an event – Having an event to train for, such as a bike race or 5k mud run, will also serve to motivate you to push onwards.
9. Set a reward system in place – After reaching each goal, you need a mini-celebration to ensure you enjoy a sense of accomplishment for all your hard work. But don't make food your reward! Pick a favorite activity, a small item you've wanted to buy, or a even a weekend off from your daily 8-minute ab workout (just do double on Friday and Monday).
10. Get a mentor – Find someone who you look up to and can turn to for advice during the hard times. A friend or fitness coach who has worked hard to lose weight and get in prime physical condition will serve to inspire as well as educate you.

Use a combination of these motivational tips, along with other strategies that help you focus on your target, and you'll have an easier time staying committed to your workout and diet program.

A Happier, Healthier You

Now you know the basic principles to getting a flat belly and ab definition. Hopefully you are excited about the healthy body you will see in the mirror as a result of adapting your diet and performing your 8-minute daily ab routine.

Don't let yourself get discouraged if at some point you experience a set-back. Realize that this is inevitable, and as long as you pick yourself back up again, it's not going to impact your progress to a great degree. The most important thing to focus on is long-term changes that support your total health, not short-term success or failure in regard to your weight.

Those who are able to stay focused despite challenges will go on to see success. Do away with all-or-none thinking, and give it 100% of your effort each and every day. Know that some days your best will be cooking a fabulous, nutrient-dense dinner and loving every second of it, and other days your best will be coming home exhausted after work to reheat a frozen meal you prepped over the weekend.

Secret to Weight-Loss Success (Free Video!)

Inspirational stories are a crucial component to every weight-loss regimen. Learn how these secrets have helped thousands of people melt away one to two pounds of stubborn body fat *every single day*.

You might be pretty surprised at how they've done it . . . I know I was!

For these people, finally getting a flat belly had nothing to do with genetics. It had nothing to do with dieting AND nothing to do with crunches.

So how did they get trim, firm stomachs with lousy genes, no ab exercises and not a single weird diet? You'll have to watch the video to find out!

Check it out now: <http://www.betteryoubydesign.com/go/3weekdiet>