

UP  
SCALE

HEALTH



## Face the Fats

By Brittney Haynes

FIND OUT THE GOOD,  
BAD AND UGLY TRUTHS  
ABOUT BODY FLAB.

At 35, an apple-figured Miko Newborn hit 280 pounds—and her breaking point. A night of binge-eating fast food, her dietary staple, found her doubled over the toilet and facing an epiphany.

"I looked in the mirror and thought, 'Oh my God, I'm repeating my grandfather's biggest mistake,'" says the Columbia, S.C., resident. A heart attack killed her grandfather at age 60, coincidentally at the exact same weight as Newborn.

Janet Brill, Ph.D., R.D., author of *Cholesterol Down*, says Newborn's apple-shaped figure was an alert for excess harmful fat. A 5-foot 8-inch Newborn would have been identified as morbidly obese, according to the body mass indicator. Women's body fat composition should ideally range between 14 and 31 percent. But if too much fat is dead and too little is unhealthy, what gives?

Simply put, fat is the body's stored energy reserve. But there are sizeable differences in the types of fats (brown and white), where they're stored and the biological implications each carries.

Brown fat would be your Clint Eastwood. According to nutrition expert Brad King, author of *99 Things You Wish You Knew Before Losing Fat for Life*, it burns energy (calories) using heat, but he adds, "Unfortunately, we all have an extremely limited supply of brown fat cells and way too many white ones."

"The excess body fat that most have learned to hate is composed of white fat cells," he continues. "White fat cells have extremely low levels of mitochondria, the molecular motors of our cells," which makes them ideal energy containers. They also, according to King, regulate the traffic of substances like genetic material and toxins throughout

WOMAN: LUCIAN COMAN; FRIENDS: DIGITAL SKULLET; GROCERIES: MICHAEL FLUPPO; RUNNER: SUPRIJONO SUHAROTO



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the body. But white fat becomes the villain of the fats when it's stored in the midsection as "bad" visceral fat, which threatens organ function.

"Studies are finding that visceral fat cells release resistin, a hormone-like chemical, that increases risk for disease," Brill says. Resistin is linked to heart disease and insulin resistance, which gives rise to diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control, excess visceral fat has also been linked to increased risk for cancers, osteoarthritis, stroke, respiratory complications and even gynecological problems.

"Ugly" subcutaneous fat, however, is merely skin deep. Located below the skin's surface, it poses little harm but causes unsightly cellulite. According to Brill, this highly visible fat often harbors in women's thighs, hips and rears, creating pear-shaped

figures. New studies even suggest that pear-shaped figures may combat diabetes and heart disease.

Unfortunately, factors like genetics and environmental conditions determine whether most of your fat goes to your gut or butt. One way to determine if your curves are more pear than apple is with a low waist-to-hip ratio (.8 or below). The most accurate measurement can only be achieved by tests like a bioelectrical impedance analysis or CT scan. But both Brill and King agree that no matter your shape, if you are carrying excessive body fat, you could still be putting yourself in jeopardy for obesity-related illness.

"I never learned mine," Newborn, now a 39-year-old at 180 pounds, says of her body composition. "It's funny how we never learn until it's critical! I just wanted to get that weight off of me. I didn't want to die at 35."

## Stick Figures

Learn four tips to help you adhere to your weight loss resolution—and accomplish it.

Research suggests nearly eight out of 10 New Year's resolutions fail—and many within days of their start. Registered dietitian and certified fitness instructor Page Love of Nutrifit Sport Therapy believes it's because people often set unrealistic, narrow goals. To help set and stick to your weight loss resolution, she suggests the following tips:

1. Incorporate smaller, short-term goals, like running half a mile, which helps get the ball rolling so that you see some earlier successes and are therefore more motivated to continue.
2. Don't make cold-turkey aspirations. Total restriction can leave you feeling deprived or defeated if you lapse.



Instead, cut back guilty pleasures like sweets or fried foods to once a week.

3. Keep a daily food and exercise log to be sure you're meeting your daily intake of vegetables and keeping up with your workouts. It also puts in perspective the amount of empty calories consumed.

4. Lastly, get support. Download a helpful fitness and nutrition application for your phone or computer, or seek the professional help of a trainer or nutritionist. —Nina Hemphill Reeder