



**22 REASONS
YOU'RE NOT
LOSING BODY FAT**

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Foreword

Are you "doing everything right" and is your diet is cleaner than an operating room but you're still not seeing the results you're after.

I feel you, it is incredibly frustrating. In these situations, it is very common to hear the advice "just eat less and exercise more."

But that's not the solution and might even be contradicting. Let's take a look at 22 common reasons why you are not losing body fat and what to do about them.



22

Reasons You're
Not Losing
Body Fat

#1. You're Not In A Caloric Deficit

Before we move on to all the other reasons, let's get started with the most important one.

You must be in a caloric deficit in order to lose weight.

This is commonly referred to as the inescapable [law of thermodynamics](#). Every diet book or "weight loss guru" who claims this is not true is just a complete joke.

Pretty much all studies performed on the subject of weight loss/gain and calories show that this is the single most important factor: [\(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#), [\(3\)](#), [\(4\)](#), [\(5\)](#), [\(6\)](#), [\(7\)](#), [\(8\)](#), [\(9\)](#), [\(10\)](#), [\(11\)](#), [\(12\)](#), [\(13\)](#), [\(14\)](#), [\(15\)](#), [\(16\)](#), [\(17\)](#), [\(18\)](#), [\(19\)](#).

In fact, the only studies that show caloric intake do not matter are the ones in which the subjects report their own caloric intake. These studies are very inaccurate and thereby not reliable since human beings are extremely inaccurate at estimating their own caloric intake [\(20\)](#).

Just take a look at an experiment performed by professor Mark Haub. He got so tired of the calories in vs calories out claim that he ate Doritos, Oreos, Twinkies, and protein shakes for a duration of 2 months while constantly being on a caloric deficit of 800 kcal per day.

The results? Professor Haub lost 27 pounds in 2 months and dropped his body fat percentage from 33.4% to 24.9% [\(21\)](#).

In short: **Create a caloric deficit.**

#2. You're Not Eating Enough Protein

The food reward system has a strong appetite for protein and thereby is commonly described as by researchers [\(22\)](#).

In fact, protein is so satiating that whenever individuals increase their intake they automatically consume fewer calories.

This was shown by a study from the University of Seattle in which the total caloric percentage of protein in their testing subjects was increased from 15% to 30% [\(23\)](#).

As a result, their total caloric intake dropped by an average of 441 calories per day, unconsciously.

While there are quite a few reasons this happens, the most important one is that protein makes you feel less hungry.

It does so by increasing the levels of GLP-1, Peptide YY, and cholecystikinin while reducing the hunger hormone ghrelin [\(24\)](#),[\(25\)](#),[\(26\)](#),[\(27\)](#).

Protein also has a high thermic value, meaning that a greater deal of calories gets "lost" during the digestion process. One study even claims that 1 gram of protein does not provide the 4-kcal as originally thought but 3.2-kcal [\(28\)](#).

Another benefit of protein is that it prevents muscle loss during a caloric deficit [\(29\)](#). This is very beneficial because muscle mass is a major determinant of metabolic rate [\(30\)](#).

#3. You're Eating Too Much Fat

Currently, many people take a ride on the low-carb train. They believe as long as they consume very low amounts of carbs they are good to go and will not gain any fat.

Someone told them insulin is a storage hormone and as long as you keep insulin levels low they will not gain weight. They can eat all the pork and butter they want and still end up magically ripped.

This, however, is not how it works. Like we've just seen is the single most important factor whether you will lose or gain weight is your total caloric balance. And fat, like any other macronutrient, contains calories; 8.7 calories per gram to be exact [\(31\)](#).

That's more than double the amounts of calories one gram protein or carb contains. Thereby you'll reach your daily caloric intake way faster if you consume high amounts of fats.

Let's take nuts for example. Just a small hand full can make the difference between successfully losing fat or losing nothing. They are very caloric dense and very easy to overeat. Have you ever seen someone eat just 10 almonds?

But this doesn't mean I'm advocating a low-fat diet since this compound is just way to important for building cell membranes, producing hormones, producing energy, and much more awesome stuff.

A great reference point for most people is to consume 20-30% of your daily caloric intake from fat. The majority of those calories should come from nutrient-rich sources like wild caught salmon, eggs, fish oil, avocado's, beef, etc.

#4. You're Not Lifting Weights

One crucial thing you have to do when trying to lose weight is being involved in some form of resistance training. This will prevent muscle loss during a caloric restriction making sure that the weight that's been lost comes from body fat, not muscle tissue [\(32\)](#).

But it will not only prevent you from becoming "skinny fat", it also helps you maintain your ideal weight in the long run since muscle mass increases your metabolic rate [\(33\)](#).

One study, for example, showed that a high-intensity training program in which individuals lifted weights to failure with short rest periods in between sets experienced a 24% increase in their metabolic rate the day after the workout (34).

By the 22-hour mark after exercise, the individuals had burned an additional 452 extra calories (from an average of 1909 to 2362 resting energy expenditure per day).

Resistance training also increases the fat burning catecholamines epinephrine and norepinephrine to a great extent and restores insulin sensitivity (35),(36).

#5. You're Prioritizing Cardio Over Interval Training

One of the most common training mistakes people make when trying to lose body fat is prioritizing steady state cardio.

While steady state cardio might burn more calories during training than other training methods, it is not the most effective way to lose body fat as was shown by a study from the Laval University.

They had 27 individuals either follow a steady state cardio program for 20 weeks or an HIIT program for 15 weeks consisting of 15 sprints lasting 30-seconds.

At the end of the study, the HIIT group lost 9 times more body fat and 12% more visceral belly fat compared to the steady state cardio group, even though their training routine was 5 weeks shorter in duration (37).

A study conducted by the University of Western Ontario backed up the superiority of interval training. They had 20 subjects following an exercise routine 3 times per week for a duration of 6 weeks.

The first group performed 4-6 treadmill sprints lasting 30-second with 4-6 minutes rest in between sets while the second group performed 30-60 minutes of steady state cardio at 65% of their V02-max.

It works as a major endocrine organ involved in regulating many processes inside the body as well as producing hormones. It produces for example estrogen (converts testosterone in estrogen in men), and also produces leptin, a hormone that regulates appetite and hunger.

It also got receptors for insulin, adrenaline, growth hormone, and cortisol (the "stress hormone"). So this fat does not just sit there all day long doing nothing.

Males usually carry greater amounts of this white fat on their abdominals, lower back, and upper back, while females usually have higher amounts hanging around at their hips and thighs.

This is the type of fat we have to focus on when trying to get rid of stubborn fat and thereby this little bad boy will be the focus upwards next section of the article.

#3. Visceral Fat

This is the type of fat that lies underneath your abdominal muscles and surrounds your organs. It increases your risk of many diseases which is why it got so much attention in the health industry.

Males usually have higher amounts of visceral fat compared to females which is one of the primary reasons why men are more prone to heart attacks.

Although visceral fat looks similar to the bare eye as white fat there are 2 differences that are of value for us to know.

First off; Visceral fat has better blood flow making it easier for your body to release this fat from your fat cells.

How it worked out?

4-6 sprints of 30 seconds burned more fat than 60 minutes of incline treadmill walking (38).

There are 5 main reasons why interval training is superior (39).

- HIIT increases metabolic rate up to 24 hours after the workout
- HIIT improves insulin sensitivity
- HIIT results in higher levels of fat oxidation
- HIIT significantly spikes the powerful fat-burning human growth hormone and the catecholamine hormones
- HIIT suppresses appetite post-workout

#6. You're Sedentary Even Though You Work Out

A recent survey conducted by CareerBuilder showed that the single biggest complaint among desk workers is the lack of physical activity (40).

Whenever you sit for long hours both your insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance start to drop (41). This causes your body to burn energy less effectively and you'll be more likely to store excess carbohydrates as fat instead of glucose.

That's why you should make a continuous effort to be active throughout the day.

Implement the following tips will get you started:

- Limit screen time and perform activities that require movement instead.
- For every hour spent seated, take at least a few minutes to get moving
- Buy a pedometer and track your steps. Shoot for at least 10,000 steps daily
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Take a bike or walk instead of the car.

#7. You're Still Consuming Sugary Drinks

If you want to lose fat or improve body composition and health in general, the first thing you should do is obtain from or drastically reduce your intake of sugary drinks.

Besides the fact that they provide no nutritional value, it's way to easy to consume massive amounts of calories from sugary drinks, because liquid calories don't satiate hunger like solid foods do [\(42\)](#).

\In fact, liquid calories might even make you more hungry by causing a severe insulin spike as been shown by numerous studies [\(43\)](#).

One of such was performed by the Department of Medicine (Boston). They showed that each daily serving of a sugar-sweetened drink increases risk of obesity with 60% in children [\(44\)](#).

But make sure you don't replace those sugary drinks with fruit juice because they generally contain just as much and sometimes even more sugar than many popular soda drinks [\(45\)](#).

Better options would be water, coffee, or tea.

#8. You're Not Drinking Enough Water

The fact that the human body consist on average about 55% of water says enough about the importance of staying hydrated for general health [\(46\)](#).

But staying hydrated will also help you lose weight according to a study performed in Blackburn back in 2010. They found that people lose on average 44% more weight when they drink half a liter (17oz) of water 30 minutes before a meal [\(47\)](#).

Drinking water has also been shown to boost the amounts of calories burned by 30% over a period of 1.5 hours [\(48\)](#).

#9. You're Not Managing Stress Properly

Reducing the stress in your life is crucial for reaching your body composition and athletic potential. By constantly being under severe stress, your body enters a mode called "fight of flight" - which elevates stress hormones like cortisol.

When your cortisol levels are chronically elevated, conditions like insulin resistance and hyperinsulinemia can follow [\(49\)](#). This, in turn, increases your hunger cravings for food and also increases ghrelin levels, the hormone that stimulates appetite which can cause you to overeat or even binge [\(50\)](#),[\(51\)](#).

I think we can all relate to this, stuffing yourself full of food in order to cope with a stressful situation. But this is not the solution. You have to go to the root of the problem and consider implementing stress reduction activities like meditation, spending time with your family and/or friends, reading a good book, etc.

#10. You're Not Getting Enough Sleep

Sleep is absolutely crucial for overall health and body composition and is one of the biggest risk factors for obesity. One meta-analysis showed that adults with poor sleep have 55% higher risk of becoming obese and children 89% [\(52\)](#).

It increases the risk of obesity by making you feel more hungry and less motivated to exercise and eat healthy [\(53\)](#).

Poor sleep also slows down weight loss, can lead to weight gain and muscle loss, and increases visceral body fat (the most dangerous type of fat) [\(54\)](#), [\(55\)](#), [\(56\)](#).

This is worrisome because according to a poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation experiences 60% of the American population between ages 13 and 64 sleeping problems every night or almost every night [\(57\)](#).

Start by implementing the following tips to improve your sleep:

- Eliminate coffee / caffeine after 1pm
- Supplement with magnesium before bed
- Sleep in a completely dark room
- Keep your stress levels low (with meditation)
- Eat the majority of carbs in the evening, this increases serotonin levels which increase sleep onset and quality
- Get sunlight exposure during the day
- Avoid blue light exposure at night

human and animal studies that normal-weight people have different gut bacteria compared to overweight or obese people [\(58\)](#), [\(59\)](#).

One study performed on mice even showed that a fecal microbiota transplant (FMT) coming from lean mice can make obese animals lose weight [\(60\)](#).

The reverse is also true. When researchers transplanted the gut bacteria of obese mice into lean mice they got fat as a result [\(61\)](#).

It's believed this is because certain probiotics may inhibit the absorption of dietary fat [\(62\)](#).

That's why you should consider optimizing your gut health by implementing the following strategies.

- **Take probiotics:** More and more studies are showing that probiotics might help with fat loss [\(63\)](#). One of such was performed back in 2013 in Japan.

In the study 210 obese individuals received a supplement consisting of the probiotic *Lactobacillus gasseri*. As a result, they lost 8.5% belly fat over a period of 12 weeks [\(64\)](#).

- It's been believed to do so primarily due to 2 reasons
 - 1) Probiotics increase the secretion of the appetite-reducing hormone GLP-1 (65). Higher GLP-1 levels are also associated with an increased metabolic rate and fat oxidation (66).
 - 2) Probiotics increase the levels of a protein called ANGPTL4 which decreases fat storage (67).
- **Eat probiotic foods** like sauerkraut, kombucha, pickles, miso, tempeh, kimchi, and fermented yogurt.
- **Eliminate stress** because it can negatively affect the balance of bacteria that naturally live in your gut (68).
- **Consume resistance starch:** Resistance starches are a special type of carb that is not digested in the stomach or small intestine but do selectively stimulate the good bacteria in our intestines. This helps in maintaining a healthy gut flora (69).

#12. You're Consuming Too Many Artificial Sweeteners

Even though most artificial sweeteners contain no or very little calories, they might hinder your fat loss goal.

While there are quite a few different types of artificial sweeteners with varying chemical structures, they all have one thing in common; They are all very effective at stimulating the sweet taste receptors on your tongue.

Splenda (sucralose), for example, a commonly used sweetener, is 600 times sweeter than regular table sugar.

This negatively affects weight loss because whenever you consume something sweet, your body releases the famous neurotransmitter dopamine, which stimulates your brain's pleasure/reward center.

Another hormone being released is the "hunger hormone" leptin, which job it is to inform your brain that you are "full" as soon as you've consumed a certain amount of calories.

The problem is that by consuming sweet food that does not contain any calories, your brain pleasure/reward center will not be deactivated and leptin will not go down since the calories never arrive.

Thereby your body starts to send strong food (especially carb) cravings in order to fill this gap.

That's why several studies have shown that consumption of artificial sweeteners is associated with weight gain [\(70\)](#),[\(71\)](#).

But not only in the short term might artificial sweeteners cause cravings, it might also in the long run according to a rat study from Isreal. They fed artificial sweeteners to their rats for a period of 11 weeks.

As a result, their gut bacteria's started to change which caused elevated blood sugar levels in the long term [\(72\)](#).

#13. You Turn a Cheat Meal Into a Cheat Week

Cheat meals can (and should) be implemented in every effective weight loss nutrition plan.

It decreases the risk of binge eating by regulating leptin levels, it increases motivation, increases testosterone and dopamine levels, and even increases metabolic rate by 3-10% the following 24-hours [\(73\)](#),[\(74\)](#),[\(75\)](#),[\(76\)](#).

But if you make the mistake of turning a cheat meal into a cheat week there is a big change you've just undone all your hard work of the last few months. That's why it's important to carefully plan your cheat meals and know when to stop.

Once every 7-14 days is a good reference point if you have to lose moderate to big amounts of weight, once every 5-7 days if you're already fairly lean.

During your cheat meal you should have no distractions and as soon as your but leaves the chair the meal is over.

#14. You Believe In Quick Fixes

Guess what..... Becoming fat doesn't happen overnight.

How much time did you need to get to the body fat percentage you are now? How many days did you have to overeat to achieve this? How many crappy foods and how many workouts have you missed to accomplish this?

Many people understand that gaining fat doesn't happen overnight but ironically do believe in quick fixes that melt fat away like snow in the sun. And when those doesn't produce the result they are after, they get frustrated and quit.

I'm sorry to tell you but there are no quick fixes and the "magic celebrity diets" you've seen on TV commercials are complete baloney. You have to understand that losing weight is not a sprint but a marathon, it is something you should integrate into your lifestyle.

Accept the fact that you have to burn more calories that you consume in order to lose weight. There are no magical foods nor supplements that do so.

#15. You Have Low Vitamin D Levels

Vitamin D deficiency has been associated with increased fat mass in every age and population group in numerous studies.

In fact, raising your vitamin D levels to a "sufficient" range above 32 ng/ml can help you lose fat as was shown by a study from the Tehran University of Medical Sciences (Iran) [\(77\)](#).

The researchers concluded that raising the vitamin D levels above 32 ng/ml in women through supplementation resulted in a significantly increased rate of fat loss.

They believed this has to do with the fact that vitamin D is crucial for insulin sensitivity and normal hormonal functioning.

The problem nowadays is that 80% of the population is deficient in this vitamin, primarily due to our indoor lifestyle [\(78\)](#).

Therefore, it might be a wise decision to get your levels checked by your physician and supplement with vitamin D if necessary. The preferred way to increase vitamin D levels is through sunlight exposure but if this is not possible supplementing with vitamin D is a great option.

The recommended dosage is 3000-IU in the winter and 1000-IU in the summer.

#16. You Have Low Testosterone Levels

Testosterone is the primary male sex hormone derived from the often demonized cholesterol.

It has significant effects on your muscle building ability, strength and power, and is positively correlated with lower fat mass [\(79\)](#),[\(80\)](#),[\(81\)](#).

The problem is; Never throughout history do men have lower testosterone levels than nowadays. It is even shown that the testosterone level of the average male has dropped by 17% over the last 20 years [\(82\)](#).

Especially people who carry extra body fat generally have lowered testosterone [\(83\)](#). This is because body fat increases the aromatization process, a process that converts your testosterone into estrogen [\(84\)](#).

Why is this important you ask?

Because low testosterone, besides a big list of other consequences, makes losing body fat way harder.

Low testosterone makes it harder for your body to burn adipose tissue (fat) and thereby increases the likelihood that your muscle mass get broken down for energy [\(85\)](#).

Low testosterone decreases your metabolic rate [\(86\)](#). This means that you must eat less to stay in a caloric deficit.

Low testosterone increases the likelihood that new fat cells get created [\(87\)](#).

Also, one study found that a testosterone decrease from 600 ng/dL to 300 ng/dL in healthy males, which is still in between the normal testosterone range (250-1200 ng/dL), resulted in a 36% increase in fat mass [\(88\)](#).

#17. You're Eating "6 Smaller meals Per Day"

Many people still believe in the myth that you have to eat 6 smaller meals per day in order to boost metabolism and lose weight.

They've been told that eating multiple smaller meals keeps the digestion process going and thereby increases metabolism.

But this isn't true.

Meal frequency does not raise nor impact your metabolism [\(89\)](#),[\(90\)](#).

Thereby does eating more frequently not result in faster weight loss [\(91\)](#).

This has to do with the fact that as long as you eat the same amount of food, the energy required to digest and store/use it remains the same.

Small meals provide a short metabolic "boost" while bigger meals provide a greater and longer lasting boost, but in the end, it remains the same.

The problem is that you're way more likely to overeat if you consume 6 meals per day compared to 2-3 meals.

That's why intermittent fasting produces such great results for many individuals.

#18. You're Not Eating Mindfully

In our modern, hectic world, a great proportion of our meals that are eaten in front of computers, televisions, or other distractions. The problem is that such environments will automatically result in eating more food.

One meta-analysis of 24 studies found that people who eat a meal when distracted unconsciously consume 10% more compared to individuals who are not distracted [\(92\)](#).

This effect is even increased later in the day since people who ate a meal distracted late in the day consumed 25% more calories compared to non-distracted eaters.

That's why a technique called "mindful eating" is one of the most powerful strategies to lose weight. It basically means you slow down during eating, eliminate all distractions, focus and enjoy each bite you consume, and listen to your body when it signals you it has had enough.

This can result in significant weight loss and drastically reduces the likelihood of binge eating [\(93\)](#),[\(94\)](#).

Implement the following strategies to get started:

- **Eliminate all distractions.** No television, computer screen, newspaper, books, or something else that can distract. Just you and your food (and friends / family)
- **Chew your food.** A recent study concluded that the average person chews each bite only 6 times before swallowing the food (95). Increase this to at least 30 bites while 40 would be even better.
- **Pretend like you're a food critic.** Focus on the food you're eating and the sensation it provides.

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They believed this has to do with the fact that vitamin D is crucial for insulin sensitivity and normal hormonal functioning.

The problem nowadays is that 80% of the population is deficient in this vitamin, primarily due to our indoor lifestyle (78).

Therefore, it might be a wise decision to get your levels checked by your physician and supplement with vitamin D if necessary. The preferred way to increase vitamin D levels is through sunlight exposure but if this is not possible supplementing with vitamin D is a great option.

The recommended dosage is 3000-IU in the winter and 1000-IU in the summer.

#19. You still haven't tried IF

Although results vary for each individual, the great majority who've given it a try experience great benefits from intermittent fasting.

While intermittent fasting has a big list of benefits, the most important ones regarding fat loss and body composition are:

- Fasting for as little as 24 hours has been shown to increase growth hormone (HGH) by 2000% [\(96\)](#). HGH is a peptide hormone known for its ability to increase fat oxidation, muscle mass, and strength [\(97\)](#), [\(98\)](#), [\(99\)](#).
- After being in a fasted state for 12 hours your enzymes shift to use more fatty acids as fuel and thereby stimulate fat loss [\(100\)](#),[\(101\)](#).
- Fasting increases the catecholamines adrenaline and noradrenaline which are known to stimulate the breakdown of fatty acids for energy [\(102\)](#),[\(103\)](#).
- Fasting increases abdominal subcutaneous blood flow which means that the catecholamines have an easier time reaching fat cells [\(104\)](#). This is especially helpful when you want to lose “stubborn body fat”
- Fasting decreases / normalizes insulin levels [\(105\)](#). Elevated insulin levels promote fat storage and inhibit the breakdown of fatty acids.
- According to a study from Sweden is a short Ramadan fast sufficient to increase testosterone levels by 180% in men [\(106\)](#). Testosterone, the primary male androgen, is known to stimulate the breakdown of fat [\(107\)](#).

#20. You Are Addicted To Food

One study conducted by the University of Newcastle (Australia) showed that around 20% of the population fits the criteria for food addiction [\(108\)](#).

This condition leads to uncontrollable binge eating every now and then making it almost impossible to lose excess weight.

The 8 most common symptoms of food addiction are:

- Being obsessed with thoughts about food
- Food cravings despite being full
- Eating to relieve worry or stress
- Eating much more than you intended
- Eating until feeling excessively stuffed
- Feeling guilty afterward, but still repeating the pattern time after time

- Making up excuses in your head why it is ok to keep eating
- Repeatedly failing at the goals you've set regarding your eating style

If you have an unhealthy relationship with food and/or believe you're a food addict, make sure to get help.

#21. Small Stuff With Big Effects

There are a lot of small things that can put a halt on your fat loss. A few common ones are:

- **Not eating enough fruits and vegetables.** Those foods, especially vegetables, are very nutrient dense and highly satiable. By increasing the intake of those foods, you'll automatically consume fewer calories overall.
- **Not being honest with yourself.** You are responsible for your body composition, not your kids, partner, physician, neighbor, or whoever. Be honest with yourself and take responsibility and remember that you are capable of achieving your goals.
- **Underlying thyroid conditions.** Underlying thyroid conditions can slow down your metabolism (although not as much as many people believe) and thereby can make losing fat more difficult. One such condition is hypothyroidism, which affects around 3-15% of the adult population ([109](#)). It might be wise to get your thyroid checked by a physician.
- **Unbalanced hormonal health.** While there are many different hormones that regulate how we function, most of them are heavily involved in regulating your body composition. It might be wise to get them evaluated by a physician.
- **Unrealistic expectations.** Don't get caught up in unrealistic expectation like losing 10 pounds of fat in one week. More realistic would be losing 1 - 2 lbs per week. (Btw. Also don't get to caught up about the weight on the scale, instead focus on your body fat percentage).
- **Being a program hopper.** With all the information overload around us, it is easy to get trapped in all the different workout routines and fancy diets. Better pick one you feel confident about and give it a try for at least 6 weeks after which you evaluate the results.

#22. Maybe You Are Losing Without Realizing It

Whenever you think you've reached a weight loss plateau, keep in mind that the weight on the scale fluctuates throughout the hours and days. This can mask weight loss.

Your body weight at a certain moment depends on quite a few variables including water retention and the foods you've just consumed.

Especially the water retention can mask your weight loss. This has to do with the fact that whenever you eat below your caloric maintenance, which you should if you want to lose weight, cortisol levels in the body rise as a natural reaction [\(110\)](#).

Elevated cortisol levels are shown to have a few side effects including increased water retention [\(111\)](#). It's been taught to do so by interfering with aldosterone (a hormone that regulates fluid balance).

Also, excessive training, especially steady state cardio, can increase cortisol levels [\(112\)](#). Thus, you might be losing body fat while the weight on the scale remains the same.

That's why you should not be so fixed about those numbers. Don't get me wrong, the scale can be a useful tool but you never know whether you've lost / gained fat, muscle mass, water weight, etc.

A better way to measure your progress is by getting your body fat levels tested by a professional with the usage of fat calipers. The mirror can also be very telling.