



## Troubleshooting and Body composition

There are a few common eating pitfalls we see.

### 1. Nuts, nut butter and cheese.

On the one hand, these are all great low carb, healthy fat foods, but on the other they're also easy to snack on, and we discourage constant snacking. The problem is that a handful here and a handful there all adds up without you realizing it. Snacking mindlessly, such as while watching a movie or while driving is a setup for overconsumption of nuts. Be mindful of the protein intake because excess protein is converted to glucose in the liver via a process called gluconeogenesis.

If these foods are problematic, then avoid purchasing them for a month or two until you've adapted to your new lifestyle.

Don't think of nuts and cheese as snacks, and take them with meals instead. There are lots of options here:

- Added to salads
- Mixed in with stir-fries and other vegetables
- Put them on top of poultry
- A crust for fish. Pistachios and hazelnuts are classic here
- Take them as a small side dish with your meals
- Limit your nut intake to ½ cup per day and cheese to 4 ounces or 100 grams.

### 2. Cut out fatty beverages.

There is really no difference between having a fatty coffee or tea and eating a full meal. Your body will fuel off that fatty drink for several hours rather than your own body fat, which is counterproductive if you are trying to lose weight. Some people use this as a fasting training wheel to allow them to fast longer, but once you get accustomed to fasting, you should try to eliminate this.

Limit creamer or milk to your tea or coffee on fasting days to less than three tablespoons per day. On eating days, drink these beverages during your eating windows rather than in between meals.

### **3. Stop eating fat bombs.**

Fat bombs are snacks usually made from a combination of butter or coconut oil, nuts, nut butters, seeds and artificial sweeteners. They are like holiday treats when you're trying to resist refined and processed treats, but they should really be for special occasions. Rather than snacking on fat, we advise you to eat a proper meal instead and avoid the temptation to constantly snack. Eating too much fat can hurt your weight loss efforts.

### **4. Non-caloric sweeteners.**

Some people do well with sweeteners, such as stevia, xylitol or erythritol, but many don't. Even though they contain no calories, they are still sweet which stimulates the appetite and produces an insulin response. Randomized controlled trials show that switching sugared beverages to non-caloric sweeteners does not cause weight loss. It's best to save them for occasional special occasions. How many people have ever told you "I switched to diet soda and lost 30 pounds?" None? That's my experience, too. The bottom line is that non-caloric sweeteners are no better than sugar.

### **5. Avoid eating too close to bedtime.**

Stop eating at least four hours before you go to bed. When you eat, food energy (calories) becomes available for your body to either use or store for future use. If you sleep right after eating, you have no need for the excess energy, and will store it as fat. Your grandmother knew that as well. There is no reason to eat bedtime snacks.

## **Body Composition**

Some people think their weight has plateaued when they're doing everything right. But have they really plateaued or is their body composition changing?

The scale isn't necessarily the best indicator of your health. This is because it just tells you your total body weight. This includes body fat as well as lean mass, like muscle and bone. You can be thin on the outside, but fat on the inside with a lot of visceral fat surrounding their organs. This is the really dangerous type of fat that's related to fatty liver and type-2 diabetes. There are better ways to track your progress than the scale.

## **1. Progress photos**

Take monthly progress photos. It's hard to see changes when you see your reflection in the mirror almost every day, but you will be surprised how much your body has actually changed if you compare yourself from a few months ago. Take a picture of yourself once a month. The scale may not have changed very much, but you will be surprised at how different you look!

## **2. Take your measurements**

Waist circumference is a better indicator of visceral fat and metabolic health than body weight. Fasting may change body composition by increasing human growth hormone, which helps build healthy lean mass upon re-feeding, keeping our bones, joints and organs strong. Celebrities like Hugh Jackman, Terry Crews and Benedict Cumberbatch have all used intermittent fasting to help them build muscle mass. Your target waist circumference is half of your height or less.

## **3. DEXA Body Composition Scan**

DEXA scans measure bone mass density when looking for osteoporosis, but it can also tell you your body composition, including total lean and fat mass, body fat percentage and the distribution of that fat. It is a low radiation scan, safe for men and women who aren't pregnant.

There are two caveats in interpreting a DEXA scan test result. Sometimes the loss of fat in or around the organs may be interpreted as a loss of lean mass. This visceral fat is burned first during a fast and is quite beneficial. Secondly, depletion of glycogen in the liver and muscles can also be interpreted as a lean mass loss. Glycogen molecules are chains of glucose used by the body for quick energy. During fasting or low carbohydrate diets, glycogen stores become depleted, forcing the body to burn fat for energy, which is what we are aiming to do.

For these reasons, DEXA scan reports can be quite concerning reporting a severe loss of muscle mass, which is usually just a false alarm. To avoid this, eat as close as possible to your usual diet for several weeks leading up to the scan for the most accurate reading. DEXA scans are useful if you have reached an ideal weight but your metabolic markers, such as hemoglobin A1c levels, are not ideal reflecting some hidden visceral fat.

If this is you, then start moving! Go for walks. Do body weight or strength training. Get active and start building some healthy, protective muscle mass.

These scans generally cost around \$100 and you would only need to have them at baseline and then every 6 months or so. They are great for motivation, to measure progress and for finding hidden visceral fat. A home body composition scale, which can range from around \$50 to over \$1,000 may also give you some useful information to track over time.