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FAQs on Fat

What's the best way to lose fat? How do you get rid of flabby arms? How can you get a flat stomach? Get the real skinny on fat with answers to these questions from Jason R. Karp, MS, PhD student, college lecturer, and track-and-field coach. (If you want help in designing a specific exercise program, contact a personal trainer.)

1 What Is the Best Way to Lose Fat?

There is no *best* way to lose fat. Each person responds differently to a training program. However, activities that incorporate many muscle groups and are weight bearing—such as fast walking, running or cross-country skiing—use more calories per minute and are therefore better suited for fat loss than non-weight-bearing activities that do not use many muscles.

Some people assume that low-intensity exercise is best for burning fat. During exercise at a very low intensity, fat does account for a higher *percentage* of the energy (calories) used, while at a moderate intensity, fat accounts for only about 50 percent of the energy. However, the *number* of calories used per minute is much greater during a moderate- to high-intensity workout than during a low-intensity workout of the same length. Therefore, the *total number* of calories burned is greater during the high-intensity workout, which means the number of fat calories burned is also greater. Because you can perform higher-intensity exercise if you break up exercise periods with rest periods, interval training is a great way to perform high-intensity workouts and help decrease body fat.

2 How Do I Get Rid of Flabby Arms?

One of the most popular exercise myths is that you can lose fat in an area of the body by exercising that specific body

Cardio Versus Strength Exercise

Should you do cardiovascular training or strength training to burn fat? Both types of exercise decrease body fat percentage. However, aerobic exercise appears to have a greater impact on fat loss than strength training does. A combination of endurance and strength training results in more fat loss than either exercise program alone, possibly because people who do both activities spend more time exercising.

part. The truth is that “spot reducing” does not work because you cannot choose where your body will get the fat it uses for energy, nor can you change fat into muscle. Doing triceps press-downs will not decrease the fat on the backs of your arms.

“Flabby arms” are somewhat a product of age. As you get older, your skin becomes less elastic and thus conforms less to your arms. However, any exercise that decreases your body fat percentage will help you lose fat on your arms as well as other body parts.

3 How Do I Get a Flat Stomach?

Genetics plays a role in whether you can achieve a “six-pack” look. Having said that, the abdominals are like any other muscle group: For their definition to become visible, the muscles must grow larger and the fat that lies over them must decrease. Strength training is only half the story. You will get a flat stomach only if you combine strength training with car-

diovascular exercise to get rid of the fat. Most people do not do nearly enough cardio exercise to decrease their body fat enough to see their abdominals. Diet is also important. People with a flat stomach have a very low percentage of body fat.

Performing abdominal crunches is just as effective as using equipment to train the rectus abdominis, the main muscle in the abdominal region. As you improve abdominal strength, you can make crunches more demanding by performing them on a movable surface, such as a resistance ball.

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