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Healthy Shape

Bye-bye belly

A toned tummy? No problem. We found 50 moves, foods, and cheats that will flatten your stomach fast.

BY KATE ASHFORD

- HOT DIET TIPS
- LOW-CAL TREATS
- TIGHTER BUTT
- HEALTHY KNEES
- BETTER ZZZ'S

- A flat stomach: It's not just about looking great in your favorite body-hugging outfit. Having a smaller waistline cuts your risks of heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems. Check out these 50 tummy-shrinking tips—including some quick fixes for fitting into those skinny jeans *tonight*.

At the gym

1 Women who **hit the gym and watch calorie intake** reduced ab fat-cell size by about 18 percent, making them more successful at tummy trimming than those who just dieted, according to a Wake Forest University study.

2 Scott Fisher, RD, director of the Fitness Center at Fairleigh Dickinson University, says **the more weight-bearing the exercise, the more calories torched** from your midsection. So walk, run, or add some jump roping to your usual routine.

3 Doing crunches? **Pull in your abs before curling up** to work your muscles twice as hard.

4 **Do the Bicycle** to target other ab muscles (crunches work only the rectus abdominus, aka your six-pack): Lie with your hands behind your head;

alternate touching each elbow to the opposite knee.

6 Research in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that women who did **full-body strength-training** twice a week decreased overall body fat and didn't gain as much ab fat as those who didn't.

7 To make your core work to stabilize your body (which strengthens abs), **do moves one arm or leg at a time**. A strong core helps you stay injury-free and gives you a pulled-in tummy, Fisher says.

8 **Don't neglect your mid-back muscles** (the lats). They work with your core to help you stand straighter, minimizing your pooch. Try Lat Rows: Bend at the waist and hold a dumbbell in each hand; bend elbows and pull weights up until elbows are level with torso.

9 To really challenge your abs, **crank out crunches on a stability ball**. You'll engage more muscles than you will doing traditional crunches, according to a study published in *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*.

10 Tight hip flexors can lead to an imbalance that makes your spine arch and pelvis tilt out, emphasizing your belly, says Susan Paul, training-program director at the Track Shack Foundation. To **loosen hip flexors**: Kneel on one knee, other leg bent, foot on floor; press pelvis forward until you feel a stretch down the front thigh of kneeling leg.

11 **Do more**. Duke University researchers found that jogging 20 miles per week



5 Your abs get used to routine, Fisher explains. **Vary your exercises** every time you hit the gym. (Throw in a new move or two, or try your usual ones on a stability ball.) You can also switch up your entire routine every month to keep your stomach guessing—and shrinking.

burns more belly fat than covering 12 miles per week.

12 **Work in intervals**. Women who did 20 minutes of interval training three times a week lost more belly fat than women who logged 40 minutes of moderate cardio three times a week, according to an Australian study.

At the bar

13 **Watch your brew**. Beer drinkers have the highest waist-to-hip ratios of those who have six or more drinks a week, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill research says.

14 **Have a little wine**. Light to moderate wine drinking can protect against ab poundage, some studies suggest. But ...

15 **Sip just one daily glass** of vino or other alcoholic beverage—more will

build your belly instead.

16 **Don't binge**. Regular, nonbinge drinkers have less tummy padding than women who drink infrequently but heavily, a *Journal of Nutrition* study says.

Before a big event

17 **Avoid carbonation**. Fizzy drinks are full of gas—and you will be, too, if you drink them, Beth Schorr-Lesnick, MD, says. The result? A not-so-svelte profile.

18 **Cut back on energy drinks**. Your body turns sugary, caffeine-laden drinks into fat faster than caffeine-free ones, spelling danger for your waistline, one New Zealand researcher notes.

19 **Don't sip through a straw**—you'll swallow extra air, which will show up on your middle, Schorr-Lesnick reveals.

20 Next time you're gassy, **take activated-charcoal caplets** (sold at most drugstores) to keep your tummy from swelling, Schorr-Lesnick says.

21 **Try probiotics**. They help break down food, preventing bloating and gas.

22 Peppermint, chamomile, and fennel tea can **relieve irritable bowel syndrome**, which may cause gas and bloating, Schorr-Lesnick explains.

23 **Nix broccoli**. It contains raffinose, an indigestible carb that'll puff you up like a parade float, Leslie Bonci, RD, says.

24 **Ditto for cabbage, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts**. If you must eat these veggies ...

25 **Take Beano beforehand**. Bonci says, a caplet or two will break down bloat-causing chemicals.

26 **Pass on the gum**. Not only can chewing it make you swallow air, but sugar alcohols in sugar-free gum and mints can cause a blown-up belly, Bonci reveals.

27 **Choose rice**. Unlike most starches, it doesn't produce gas as it's digested. No gas, no bloating.

At the table

28 **Eat well, eat more**. Women in the Framingham Nutrition Studies who ate 360 more calories of healthier foods per day were less prone to ab fat than those who ate fewer calories, more saturated fat, and less fiber.

29 **Obese adults who increase whole-grain intake**

zapped more tummy pooch than those who stuck to refined grains, Penn State researchers found.

30 Up your calcium. Dieters who got 1,200 to 1,300 milligrams of daily calcium saw three times the belly trimming as those consuming the same calories but less calcium, University of Tennessee researchers said.

31 Get your daily dose from yogurt, rather than other dairy sources or supplements; its calcium may help whittle your middle, an *International Journal of Obesity* study points out. But ...

32 Choose yogurt wisely. Rats who ate saccharin-sweetened yogurt gained more weight and body fat—including around the waistline—than those who ate sugar-sweetened yogurt, Purdue University researchers found.

33 Dieters noshing on 3 ounces of almonds a day trimmed their waists by nearly 7 inches after 24 weeks, versus less than 5 inches among the non-almond-eaters, a study published in the *International Journal of Obesity* showed.

34 Enjoy soy. Women sipping soy shakes every day for three months didn't add any midlife fat to their middles, according to research from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

35 Pick lean protein. Moderate servings—about 40 percent of your daily calories—in your diet may lead to overall weight loss, particularly in the tummy, a study from Skidmore College reveals.



41 Try Pilates. According to a Greek study, these exercises significantly improve posture—and that naturally minimizes a pooch. Turn to page 124 for some great Pilates moves.

36 Research out of Spain shows that a diet rich in monounsaturated fats, like a **Mediterranean diet**, can prevent belly fat.

37 Ban trans-fat. Monkeys who got much of their dietary fat from trans fats had 30 percent more belly flab than those who ate more monounsaturated fats, a Wake Forest University study found.

38 Go easy on fiber. Too much can leave you bloated, Schorr-Lesnick says. Aim for at least 20 grams per day, but add it to your diet gradually, and be sure to pair it with plenty of H₂O.

39 University of South Australia researchers found that overweight people who took **6 grams of fish oil** every day for three months and exercised three times a week nixed body fat, especially from their middles.

40 Get your C. Women who took in 56 milligrams or less per day (the

recommended dietary allowance is 60 mg) were more likely to accumulate belly fat than those who got 57 mg or more, a *Journal of Public Health Nutrition* study found.

In your life

42 Move! A Duke University study showed that a couch-potato lifestyle resulted in an 11.6 percent increase in deep-belly fat in women over eight months.

43 stop smoking: Nicotine keeps abs from burning fat, so smokers often have more deep-tissue belly fat.

44 Relax. Women with the largest waistlines also reported the highest stress levels, possibly due to the production of the stress hormone cortisol, Yale University research showed.

45 Beat the blues. Depression is associated with higher rates of abdominal fat in women, says a study published in *Obesity*.

46 Get more sleep. Women who get only five hours of shut-eye a night are almost twice as likely to be obese as those who get seven hours, Columbia University researchers point out.

The cheats

Want an instant fix? Try these belly-flattening tricks from Los Angeles-based style expert Daisy Lewellyn.



47 Kut Kollection Stretch Sailor Jeans (\$158; www.nordstrom.com). The double-button closure and long zipper act like a mini-corset, pulling in your tummy.



48 Spanx Higher Power Panties (\$36; www.spanx.com). Say good-bye to muffin top: These undies smooth lines from below the bust all the way to mid thigh.



49 Assets Fantastic Firmers Cami (\$20; www.target.com or Target stores). Great basic firm-your-tummy layer in black or white, with spaghetti straps.



50 Shapefx Control Pencil Skirt (\$45; www.shapefx.com). This skirt holds you in and gives you a sleek profile.