

Blast Fat and Build Abs **in Just 30 Minutes a Day!**

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Introduction

It's impossible to estimate the number of people out there who are desperately searching for a way to blast the fat they've gained and create a trimmer shape, complete with abs that are ripped and sexy.

We all know that being overweight not only makes you feel less attractive, but it's an unhealthy state of being. Carrying too much extra weight can lead to heart disease, diabetes and other diseases and unhealthy conditions.

It's important to learn how to get that weight off and keep it off – for the sake of your health as well as your self-esteem and overall happiness.

When it comes to your abs, the healthier and stronger they are, the better you'll look and feel. Tight abs look great, but they also help protect your back from injury and help to keep your posture straight, which is good for your entire body and also makes you look more attractive and confident.

The bad news is that there are a lot of myths about how to best go about getting the abs and body of a star, and it's pretty hard to sift through all of the misleading information that's being pumped out day after day on the packages of miracle fat burning products and the newest six-pack creating exercise machine or program.

The good news is that you truly can burn off that fat and build killer abs in the process! In 30 minutes a day, no less. Even if you're sorely out of shape and think you'll never be able to do it, there is a way that works.

Does it require dedication? Yes.

Does it require some work on your part? Yes.

Is it impossible to achieve? No.

Here's more good news – when you follow the program I'm going to outline for you in this book, you'll discover that not only does your flab decrease and disappear, but your belly will tighten into a sexy, strong abdominal region, and your overall health will increase.

You'll feel better, your skin and hair will look better, you'll have more energy and stamina and you'll have a stronger immune system to boot!

I know that you've probably already tried a bunch of different diet and exercise programs. And I know that you might be feeling pretty discouraged right now. But the payoff for following this program and giving yourself a chance to see success is long-term.

I suggest you read this book over and take in all of the information presented. Then commit yourself to beginning a new way of life that incorporates what you've learned. You'll have to make some basic lifestyle changes. You'll have to eat better and you'll have to work your body - especially the abdominal area.

I'm not going to lie and tell you that in two weeks you'll be slim and toned. It might take longer than that. But the truth is that if you never start the program, you'll never see the beautiful results of it.

You can blast that fat and get those abs in tip top shape, along with the rest of your body. You can fit into the clothes you want to fit into. And you can build a body that you're proud of.

Chapter 1: Why Flat Abs and a Trim Figure Are Better for You

Usually, the reason people seek out advice on getting flat abs and losing weight is to look better. There's nothing wrong with this. We all want to look great and in today's society, looking great means being trim and firm – that's what's accepted as most attractive.

Now I need to briefly point out that there's a big difference between looking awesome and healthy and looking like you've starved yourself to the point where you're nothing but skin and bones.

Skin and bones isn't a great look, no matter what the models and movie stars are doing. A healthy weight with toned and defined muscles is a great look - and it's what most people consider to be attractive.

You want to look great. That's normal because we all do. Looking great involves a lot of aspects and means different things to different people. Most agree that a trim body looks nicer than an overweight body or a super skinny body.

Looking great also involves how you wear your make-up (if you're a woman), your hairstyle and choice of clothing and accessories. It involves how you hold yourself – is your posture straight, conveying a feeling of confidence, or is it rounded and hunched over?

Do you always look neat and put together? This doesn't mean that you have to spend thousands on the newest styles and always be dressed as if you're going to a party – this just means that you look neat and clean and coordinated, even if that means a pair of jeans and a plain white t-shirt with combed hair and straight posture.

Think about your smile. A sincere and pleasant smile adds to anyone's good appearance, as do other signs of a pleasant temperament.

Even if you don't have the perfect shape yet, your appearance hinges on other factors and will even after you lose that weight around the middle and get defined abs.

But let's get back to the trim shape. Being in shape will open more doors for you. Whether that seems fair or not, it's true.

Because humans are so visual and we base a lot on our first impressions of people by how they look, your shape can make a difference, as can the things I mentioned earlier such as hair, cleanliness and neatness, and your smile.

When it comes to your body, having a trim and toned figure can get you more dates, or help to keep your spouse or significant other more interested in you.

Being slim and toned can help you get jobs. It's a fact that at least in some professions, people who appear to be in better shape and healthier may get preferential treatment when applying for jobs and entering new careers.

Is this fair? Probably not, but it is human nature, and human nature is difficult to fight. It's easier to get into shape and project the confidence that comes with being in better shape.

So for the reason of looking good alone, flat abs and a trim figure are better for you – without a doubt.

Improving Your Health by Burning Fat and Flattening Abs...

There are more reasons than just looking awesome on the beach to get rid of your extra fat and develop a set of nice abdominal muscles. Your health will improve when you work toward toning up and slimming down.

Did you know that having a smaller waistline cuts your risks of heart disease and diabetes, and flat, firm abs help keep your back stronger?

Let's take a look at diabetes. Type II diabetes is the most common type of diabetes and occurs when the body doesn't make enough insulin or the cells of the body don't recognize the insulin, so they don't use it.

Insulin is the essential component necessary for breaking glucose (the body's basic fuel) down for energy. If the body doesn't use the glucose properly, the cells can become energy-starved. If this continues for a long period of time, your kidneys, eyes, nerves and even your heart can be damaged.

One of the biggest risk factors for developing type II diabetes is being overweight, and more specifically carrying that weight in the belly area. Losing even 15 pounds can help reduce your chances for developing diabetes significantly.

Diabetes is a serious condition that can be prevented, or at the very least, delayed in onset. If you're overweight and carrying around extra belly fat, you're putting yourself at a higher risk for diabetes. Prevention of diabetes involves three simple steps that will also help you get in shape:

1. Exercise each and every day.
2. Develop healthier eating habits.
3. Lose some weight, maintain a lower weight level and work on all of your muscle groups, including your abs.

Let's turn our attention to heart disease.

Do you want to do something to help prevent heart disease? Shed some weight! By losing weight, you'll give your heart muscle, the most important muscle in your entire body, a break by making it easier for the heart to pump blood through your body.

When you weigh more than you should, your body needs your heart to pump extra blood through it. Instead of beating faster, your heart actually grows a bit to move more blood every time it beats.

This can lead to high blood pressure, which increases your risk for stroke. Besides possibly increasing blood pressure, the heart will eventually begin to suffer from its increased workload and over time, congestive heart failure could develop.

Research indicates that a waist measurement of more than 35 inches in women and 40 inches in men can mean a higher risk for heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes. This is why you need not only to work on losing weight, but work on trimming that waistline.

Along with getting a slimmer waist, developing those abs will be like icing on the health and good looks cake!

How Strong Abs Help Your Back...

Most people experience lower back pain at one point or another in their lives. Some experience lower back pain a lot! Often, this pain isn't caused by an injury, but from the back trying to overcompensate for weak abdominal muscles.

Strong, toned abs help to create strong core muscles, which stabilize and support the spine in return. So when you get going on developing those abs, you're also working on saving yourself a lot of back pain in the future.

Many everyday activities require us to use the back as the foundation for movement. Think about it – getting out of bed, opening a heavy door, lifting groceries or a child, walking the dog, or checking the oil in your car – they all require your core to work harder.

It's important to keep your abs and core muscles strong and healthy so that your back stays strong and injury-free.

Chapter 2: The Myths of Fat Busting and Flat Abs

I hit on this briefly in the introduction to this book – the fact that there are a lot of myths floating around about how to get rid of fat and get flat abs fast.

You've seen the advertisements. Some are for miracle diets, or miracle diet pills or drinks. Some are for a new exercise machine or a piece of equipment that's guaranteed to get you a ripped six-pack in a week or two.

Some myths say that if you eat this food or that food, or don't eat this or that, your abs will flatten and the fat will melt off your body. Or that certain foods actually burn fat.

The thing about these myths is that while some may have elements of truth to them, all are full of hype and none of them are going to be able to produce the incredible results they are promising simply because they are either incomplete answers to the question of how to lose weight and tone your abs, or they are flat-out rip-offs that are built to get you to pay for a miracle.

Yes, I know this sounds harsh, but the truth is that there are a lot of myths and half-truths that you need to be aware of and beware of. I wouldn't want to put myself through spending the time, energy and possibly money for something that isn't going to work, and I don't want you to have to go through that either. It's just too disappointing.

I think it's better to have a truthful and comprehensive plan laid out for you that you know will work if you follow it, than relying on eating only cabbage and using some sort of ab exercise machine that may or may not help at all.

Let's look at some of the myths of fat busting and flat abs that you might run into:

Myth #1: Everything labeled a *health food* is really healthy.

Beware of foods that seem healthy, and even tout themselves as being healthy, but hide a nasty secret such as sugar, fat, or sodium in unhealthy levels. Some “healthy” foods are even full of chemical additives.

An example would be some of the “healthy” granola bars we see on the store shelves. Granola is healthy, right? Well, yes and no. Check the label and remember, the fewer ingredients the better. Some are packed with sugar and sodium. Sorry, but lots of sugar isn't healthy and it's not going to help you lose weight.

Another example could be diet sodas. They have no sugar in them. That's great, but the sugar substitute they use can be dangerous to your health. Stick with water and pure juices, teas and other unadulterated drinks.

Myth #2: Fad diets can help you lose weight permanently.

If it promises miracle results in a matter of days and you're eating in a very unbalanced way, it's a fad diet. You might actually lose weight on it, but you will have a very difficult time maintaining that weight loss unless you plan to eat in the same unbalanced way for the rest of your life! That wouldn't be healthy and if you aren't healthy, it really doesn't matter how trim you are.

Fad diets are made for quick, yet unsustainable weight loss and they are simply unhealthy enough that they may actually harm you. It's smarter to learn the right way to eat for steady and maintainable weight loss.

Myth #3: There are certain foods that will make you lose weight.

As nice as that would be, this isn't true. The truth is that there aren't any foods that can burn fat or make you lose weight. Some foods might boost your metabolism a bit for a little while (such as green tea), but they really won't cause you to lose weight.

Myth #4: Fat burning pills work.

There isn't a pill that you can take that will burn fat away. And diet supplements that decrease your appetite come with risks.

Myth #5: If it says it's natural, it will work and it's okay to use.

Not necessarily. There are many diet supplements on the market that contain “natural” or “herbal” ingredients that don't necessarily work well and may not be safe. Remember ephedra?

It's an herbal ingredient that *did* seem to help with weight loss, but had the potential for causing very serious side effects and health problems, up to and including death. Even if a product says it doesn't have ephedra, it

doesn't mean it's not potentially dangerous. Nor does it mean that it will help burn fat and build abs.

Myth #6: Doing lots of crunches and sit-ups, or using an “ab machine” is the best way to get ripped abs.

It's not that you shouldn't do ab exercises - it's just that you can't rely only on crunches or your ab machine to help you trim your waist and tone your belly. You have to use a combination of the right types of exercise along with proper nutrition. There's no other way.

Ab machines are generally a waste of money because you can do all the same moves without the machine that you can with it. They're gimmicks to get you all excited and make you think that you're going to get a six-pack just by doing that machine for a short time every day. It's going to take more than a gimmick to achieve that perfect body. Don't waste your money.

Myth #7: You shouldn't lift weights because they will cause you to become bulky.

Strength training and weight lifting does build muscle, but muscle burns more calories than fat. So building muscle actually will help you lose weight. Doing weight lifting 2 to 3 times per week is ideal and won't build up bulky muscles. It will help you lose weight and give definition to all of your muscle groups, giving you a more attractive look.

And the good news is that you don't have to do a bunch of heavy-duty weight lifting to get the benefit. If you use some lightweight dumbbells or a medicine ball, you'll gain extra muscle.

Myth #8: You have to do tons of cardio exercise to burn fat.

It's true that you do need cardio exercise for health and for helping to lose weight and burn fat, but cardio does not need to be your only source of exercise for burning fat and getting your abs in shape, nor do you have to do cardio until you drop! Instead, you need to combine cardio workouts with strength training and stretching so that you get a complete fat burning and muscle building plan.

Myth #9: Eating carbohydrates is bad for you.

This simply isn't true. You need carbs in your diet, but you also need to make sure you're eating the right kind of carbs. Simple carbohydrates such as those found in white bread aren't good for you. Complex carbs

like those found in whole grain breads are actually helpful when you're trying to burn fat.

Myth #10: You should eliminate fat from your diet for good.

Also not true. A certain amount of fat (the right kind) is necessary for your health and will not keep you from losing weight, fat and your belly.

Myth #11: Losing weight quickly is the best way to do it.

No. It's unhealthy to drop weight too quickly and it's nearly impossible to maintain a quick weight loss. It's much, much better to do it at a steady and reasonable pace. No matter how badly you think you want to slim down in a matter of days or weeks, it's not realistic to expect good results that way.

Another reason that you don't want to lose weight too quickly is that your skin needs time to tighten up as you lose. Especially for those who are planning to drop quite a bit of weight, the danger of being left with hanging skin is present.

In order to keep that from happening, a reasonable rate of weight loss (1 – 2 pounds per week), gives your skin a much better chance of firming up along with the rest of your body as you lose weight and tone up.

Myth #12: You can get flat abs in “5 Easy Moves” (or 3 or 7 or whatever).

Flat abs take work and a combination of exercise types and a healthy, low-fat diet. Doing “5 easy moves” won't get you flat abs and certainly not a six-pack. I don't want you to become discouraged, because you can get a great belly with plenty of muscle definition. But it takes more than a few certain exercises.

Myth #13: Spot toning works!

If you try to lose fat in one spot by exercising that one spot, it won't work. The key to flattening your belly, or to toning any other part of your body is to increase your body's metabolism so it can get rid of excess fat around your waistline and all over your body. Once the fat is gone, the toned muscles can show through. That's just how it works.

Myth #14: Quantity is better than quality when it comes to exercises.

The crunches, which as I said before are fine for helping to tone your abs, won't do the whole job. Some people think it's better to do hundreds of crunches, even in a sort of half-hearted way.

Wrong. It's better to do fewer crunches, or any type of strengthening exercise in excellent form and at the right pace, even if that means doing fewer of them. They will be more effective in the long run.

If you spend some time searching the Internet or reading magazines, you'll find all of these myths and probably more. And when you head to the grocery store or the pharmacy, you'll find all sorts of foods and weight loss products in packaging that declare them healthy and helpful when it comes to losing weight.

The infomercials on TV will tell you to get the latest ab exercising machine and promise that you'll have a flat, sexy belly in the blink of an eye, while another infomercial will try to sell you a diet drink that consists of cabbage juice and yogurt, promising that the pounds will melt away and you'll look just like a model.

We all want to believe the hype. We all want to believe that if we do 200 crunches a day, all the fat around our waistline will disappear leaving behind an abdominal region that will be the envy of all.

The truth is that the myths are just that – myths.

It's time for a reality check and the reality is that burning fat, losing weight and getting a sexy, flat belly is going to take a combination of things – call it a multi-pronged attack. And it's going to take some dedication and commitment on your part.

Don't let this scare you. You can do this. Whether you have twenty pounds to lose and a bit of a beer belly, or you have 100 pounds to lose and you know for sure it's going to take a lot to get those abs to the point where you're ready to show them off – you can do this.

The myths and the hype are made to do one thing – sell something. Instead of buying into them, use your time, energy and hard earned cash for something else that is more worthwhile – developing super-healthy eating habits, learning the right way to exercise for fat burning and boosting your metabolism, and moving your body in ways that will encourage the strengthening, toning and definition of not only those abs, but of all of your muscle groups.

Will this happen overnight? In a week? In two weeks? No. It will take some time. You might have to wait a few weeks before you start to see results and then it might a little longer to reach your final goal.

It all depends on what kind of shape you're in when you start out. But, if you focus on proper nutrition and devote 30 minutes every day to working on those abs, you'll find that it does happen!

Just know that the best way, and really the only way that works, is to do it the *right* way. That means learning about nutrition and exercise.

The remainder of this book is going to be devoted to developing healthy eating habits, promoting weight loss at a sane pace, burning fat, and developing a tight, flat belly. You're going to learn a lot and when you're through, you'll be equipped with all the ammunition you need to win the war against excess weight and that flabby, fat belly.

You might be wondering if you can try any of the diet supplements or tricks, or exercise machines while you're working with the plan outlined in this book. The answer is yes, if you insist on it, but I would strongly advise you to use a lot of caution with any pill or supplement and seriously to not bother to waste your money – either on the supplements and pills or the abdominal exercise equipment.

They probably aren't going to help, and could actually hurt. If you want to spend money, you can go out and purchase some dumbbells or a lightweight medicine ball. They will actually come in handy and they'll be effective, too.

Chapter 3: Healthy Eating

I don't have to tell you that you should be eating healthy foods. This isn't rocket science and you've heard it from the time you were a child – eat your vegetables, don't eat so much ice cream and so many potato chips and French fries, eat lean meats, blah, blah, blah.

The truth is that many of us are loving the “bad” stuff and not eating enough of the “good” stuff. And as the world has gotten faster and busier, it seems like everything is fast, frozen, salted, sugared and packaged up - we've gotten used to eating like that.

It's not good for health and it certainly isn't good for the waistline or uncovering those ab muscles that are hidden beneath a sheath of flabby fat. You are never, ever going to see those abdominals until you get rid of the fat.

It doesn't matter how many exercises for your abs you do or how many miles you walk or laps you swim. Fat burning and developing sexy abs starts with healthy eating. There is no way around this, so if you haven't been eating a super healthy diet, plan on starting now.

Besides getting a better body, the advantage to eating healthy is that you're going to feel better, have more energy, be in a generally better mood and be better prepared to fight off or prevent illnesses and disease. Eating a proper diet does wonders for you!

How Proper Nutrition Gives You More Energy

Our bodies get their energy to do things from the foods we consume. As you know, without food, we'll die because our bodies simply have no way to produce energy on their own. Food is necessary.

Your body uses food to produce energy by converting it into glucose (blood sugar). Carbohydrates are the most easily converted type of food for energy, and are the main ingredient in the recipe for keeping your energy at a steady level.

The problem with this is that you have to know which kinds of carbs are good, causing a steady level of energy and which are not-so-good, causing your energy level to spike and then crash, leaving you feeling tired and lethargic.

Simple carbohydrates, such as sugar and the carbs found in white bread are turned into energy very quickly. They give you an almost immediate boost, followed by a sharp drop in blood sugar levels and your energy leaving you unable to accomplish much of anything.

On the other hand, complex carbohydrates, like breads with whole grains give your body a subtler boost in energy and one that lasts and remains steady. So you have a constant stream of energy throughout your day that helps you feel more energized and able to get things done.

Eating complex carbohydrates also helps to avoid that mid-afternoon dip in energy that many people get, and helps to keep your energy sustained from morning to night.

If you want to enjoy higher energy levels without the nasty ups and downs, you will want to eat plenty of complex carbohydrates, protein (which the body also likes to use for energy), and low-fat foods. Don't overdo it with simple carbohydrates.

Here is a basic list of complex carbohydrate foods:

- Wholegrain pasta
- Brown rice
- Grains such as barley, whole wheat and oats
- Wholegrain breads (wheat, oat, bran, etc)
- Wholegrain cereals (watch out for added sugar)
- Oatmeal
- Yams
- Peas, beans and other legumes

And here is a list of simple carbohydrates to avoid:

- Processed sugar
- White bread, rolls, etc.
- Candies

- Chocolate
- Desserts
- Sweet snacks
- Sugar-coated cereals

Note: Some fruits are considered to be simple carbohydrates because they have a lot of naturally occurring sugar. It's true that they will give you a quick burst of energy and that energy will drop off some afterwards. But fruit is still very good for you and an essential part of a healthy weight loss and fat burning plan, so eat your fruits!

Your breakfast and lunch should be the most significant meals of the day, with your dinner being smaller – you don't need all those calories or all that energy food for going to bed. You can also have two small snacks a day to help keep your energy going, but make sure they don't push you over the edge as far as calories go.

Energizing snacks that taste great, and are low in fat and calories could include yogurt mixed with whole grain (unsweetened) cereal, a handful of almonds, or half a turkey sandwich with whole grain bread and low-fat mayo.

Even though you're working to lose weight and get rid of fat, you still have to eat right. If you don't provide your body with energy, you're not going to feel like working out, and exercise is an essential part of your fat blasting and ab building program.

Proper nutrition supplies you with more energy at a more stable level because your body is getting the right fuel – fuel that burns at a steady rate.

When it comes to energy, we refer mostly to carbohydrates, but be aware that alcohol, protein and fats are also be used by the body for energy. Alcohol burns very quickly and if you've been drinking, it's what the body will use first.

This is because your body can't store alcohol energy. You don't want to consume much alcohol when you're working on weight loss because it keeps your body from using carbs, proteins and fats.

Proteins will also be used for energy by the body. It's important to be sure you eat enough proteins to supply your body with the building materials for muscles and cells, but also a source of energy.

Fats are the last things that your body will burn for fuel. This is why you don't want to consume a lot of fats, especially if you're already overweight. Eating right, and watching your intake of calories will assure that your body will start dipping into its own fat stores and burning some of what's sitting on your belly and hips.

Why You Still Need Some Fats in Your Diet

Even when you're in the middle of working to get rid of fat, you still need to consume some fats each day. Why is this?

- Fat serves as insulation and protection for vital organs in the body.
- Fat helps keep skin and nails healthy.
- Fat helps keep your hair healthy (and on your head).
- Fat aids digestion.
- Fat helps the body to absorb vitamins A, D, E and K.
- Fat helps to maintain cell membranes.

Although everyone needs some fat in his or her diet, most of us get way too much fat. Fat is good in small doses. You can find out how many grams of fat you need per day by doing a simple search online.

A basic guideline would be as follows:

If you're eating 1200 calories per day, you should consume about 40 grams of fat. If you're eating 1500 calories, you need about 50 grams of fat; 2000 calories – 65 grams of fat. You can find out how many grams of fat are in the foods you're eating by checking labels and reading nutrition information.

What Kinds of Fats Are Good, and Which Are Bad?

There's another point to keep in mind about fats before you shun them or embrace them. Some are much better for you than others, and if you're

going to eat fat, you should definitely eat the healthy ones and stay far away from the bad ones.

The winners of the “good fats” label are monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats.

Monounsaturated fats (also known as MUFAs) help to lower cholesterol and have actually been found to be helpful in the fight against body fat – this doesn't mean that you should load up on them. It just means that they are helpful. Nuts, avocados, olive and canola oil contain monounsaturated fats.

Polyunsaturated fats also help with lowering cholesterol and are rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, which is helpful in protecting against heart disease. Fish oil, corn, soy, sunflower and safflower oils contain polyunsaturated fats.

So if you're going to eat fats, read your labels and stick with these.

The bad guys of the fat world include saturated fats and trans fats.

Saturated fats raise your cholesterol, increasing your risk of heart disease. Meats, dairy products, eggs and some seafood contain saturated fats, as do coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil (these are sometimes called tropical oils on food labels).

Trans Fats are an invented kind of fat and are found in a lot of commercially packaged foods and fast foods, as well as in stick margarine and vegetable shortening. Trans fats are unhealthy because they increase cholesterol and the risk for coronary disease.

Don't strive to eliminate fats from your daily diet. But remember that part of the reason you're reading this book is that you have been consuming too much fat for some time now.

What might seem normal is probably way too much, and the only way you are going to slim down and expose those abs is by getting rid of the fat you've stored up. So eat a little, but watch it closely.

Proteins – Building Blocks for Strong Abs

Some have said that you have to eat a lot of protein to get great abs. While protein is certainly important and necessary as building block for

your abdominal muscles and just about everything else in your body, you don't need to overdo it.

Eating a healthy diet that is low-fat, low in calories and that does contain good protein sources will help you not only build a great set of abs, but also great muscles in general, along with healthy cells, bones, hair and nails.

You don't have to go out and buy a fancy and expensive protein powder to get enough protein in your diet. Just take the following steps and you'll do well:

- Choose lean meats such as skinless chicken and poultry (light meat, not dark), pork tenderloin, and lean beef.
- Incorporate fish into your diet. Fish and seafood are great sources of protein and most are low in fat and also offer the added advantage of Omega-3 fatty acids, which are great for your heart.
- Beans and nuts contain lots of protein. Nuts can be pretty high in fat, so be aware of your portion size – generally, about one quarter to one half a cup.
- Low-fat dairy products provide protein. Choose low-fat yogurt, milk and cheeses. They are also wonderful for providing calcium.
- Egg whites contain protein and little fat, so they're great for losing weight and adding protein to your diet.
- Even whole wheat bread and other wholegrain products contain protein.

Most Americans get plenty of protein in their daily diet – enough to build muscle. This means that as long as you're paying attention to eating a healthy diet on a daily basis, you won't need to add any extra protein, even to get those abs defined.

The Food Pyramid – It's Still a Good Tool After All These Years

Remember when you were in elementary school and you studied the food pyramid? All of the stuff we liked was at the tiny point at the top, or worse, it wasn't there at all (where's the chocolate cake?).

It might seem like an old-fashioned way to make your food choices, but even today, the food pyramid is a good guideline. You have grains as the base, then fruits and vegetables, followed upward by dairy and proteins and then at the tip-top, fats, oils and sweets (I guess that's where the chocolate cake is hidden).

The suggestion is that you eat 6 – 11 servings of grains (breads, cereals, pasta and rice) a day; 3 – 5 servings of vegetables and 2 - 4 servings of fruit; 2 – 3 dairy and protein servings each and a sprinkling of fats and oils.

This isn't out of line, even for someone who is working at losing weight. The key is that serving sizes are usually far smaller than what we imagine them to be, and of course, you have to be very selective about the types of foods you eat, even if they are on the pyramid.

What the food pyramid does for us is illustrates what your body needs to function properly and to maintain good health. It tells you how much to eat of each type of food. So it's a great tool and a wonderful basis for healthy eating, but it doesn't give you the whole story.

Your Concept of Serving Sizes Might Really Be Messed Up

Over the course of who knows how many years, we've been tricked into believing that a serving of food is much larger than it really should be. With all of the super-sizing going on and changes in the way food is served at restaurants, we've gotten a very distorted impression of serving size.

This is one of the culprits in weight gain and in order to fix this particular problem, you need to understand what a serving size really is:

Breads

1 slice - about the size of a plastic CD case
Half an English muffin or bagel
1 - 6" corn or flour tortilla
Half of a hot dog or hamburger bun

Pasta and Rice

1 half cup of pasta, spaghetti, macaroni or rice

Vegetables

1 small baked potato or one half cup of mashed potatoes

1 half cup of peas or corn
1 cup of acorn squash
1 half cup of beans or lentils
1 cup of raw or raw leafy vegetables

Fruits

1 small apple, or one half cup of unsweetened applesauce
12 – 15 grapes
1 cup of cubed cantaloupe
1 cup of raspberries
2 small plums
1 medium orange

Dairy

1 cup of milk
1 cup of soymilk
1 cup of yogurt
1.5 -2 ounces of cheese (about the size of 2 – 1 inch cubes)

Meat, Poultry and Firm Tofu

1 serving is about the size of a deck of cards

Fish

1 serving is about the size of a checkbook

Oils

A serving is 1 teaspoon

Salad Dressing

A serving is 2 tablespoons

Nuts

1 serving is about a half ounce

This list isn't comprehensive. I could write an entire book on the serving size for every kind of food. But I'll bet that you probably gasped with surprise

when you saw some of these serving sizes and you're probably upset that you've been eating much larger portions, thinking it was okay.

One of the main ways you're going to lose that weight and blast that fat is by watching your serving sizes closely.

What You Have to Avoid

You already know that you have to steer clear of the ice cream and all you can eat fried chicken. But there are a couple of things that I want to bring to your attention as things that you'll want to stay away from:

- Meats and poultry parts that are fatty
- High fat content foods

Don't get marbled steaks. Make sure you buy lean meats like a filet mignon. And whenever possible, get a low or no fat version of your food products. Chances are, you'll get plenty of fat throughout your day in other areas.

Chapter 4: Weight Loss

Burning fat, losing weight and building abs – that's your goal. It's a three-pronged effort to make a difference in your body, your health and your life, and each of those prongs works best when all three are being tended to. It's easier to accomplish one when you're also working on the others.

Losing weight isn't as easy as we'd like it to be. It takes commitment and resolve. You have to want it enough to put it before other things that you're used to doing or eating. But it's worth it in terms of improved health and confidence in how you look.

To simply lose weight, you have to consume less fuel than your body needs. This will force it to use up some of the fuel your body has stored up in the form of fat. So the basis of weight loss is eating a diet that contains fewer calories and fat.

When you add cardio exercise and specific workouts designed to target your abdominal area, you will find that you lose weight more quickly, burned fat more effectively and develop the toned abs that you want.

Experts say that in order to lose weight in a way that promotes being able to keep it off over the long term, you should lose at a steady rate of 1 – 2 pounds per week. This might not seem like much, but it's the kind of steady weight loss that is maintainable, and also healthier for your body.

Steady weight loss at a reasonable pace is also much better if you have a lot of weight to lose and you fear that you'll have sagging skin after you've lost all that weight. When you lose more slowly, your skin has a chance to regain some or all of its elasticity and tighten back up, so you don't have so much sagging skin to contend with.

Losing weight at a reasonable rate also assures that your body is using up fat and not muscle, and helps to keep your body systems from getting mixed up from a sudden, quick weight loss.

Losing too quickly can deplete your body of much-needed minerals and cause fatigue, cramps and nausea. You might have some hair loss associated with fast weight loss. Quick weight loss can also cause your body to go into "starvation mode" where it refuses to allow its metabolism to speed up, meaning that it's doing everything it can to hang on to the energy stores it has.

How to Lose Weight

Weight loss at its essence is about creating a calorie deficit, meaning that you take in less than your body needs for fuel. As mentioned earlier, you do this by taking the following steps:

First, determine how many calories you consume each day. You can go online and find the caloric content for just about every food and drink under the sun. Product information and nutrition labels also provide calorie information.

Track everything! If you're eating something that you've made from scratch at home, you'll have to look at the individual ingredients and amounts and then do some math to determine how many calories you've consumed.

Take at least a week to do this, and more if you can. This will help you find out exactly where you're at with your food and drink intake and how you need to cut back. You don't have to be exactly on the dot as far as the number of calories you're consuming, but it helps to try to be as accurate as possible.

As you're tracking your caloric intake, write down everything you eat each day. Even a small piece of candy or gum. It would be easy to track both your caloric intake and your food intake in one journal – maybe just a simple notebook. Try to do this for at least a week, too, and don't forget about the spoonful of sugar that you sprinkle on your morning cereal or in your coffee.

Now it's time to see where cutbacks are necessarily. If you can reduce 500 calories from your diet every day, you'll lose 1 pound per week. Remember that you're going to be exercising too, so that will help to burn extra calories.

So if you take 500 calories out of your daily diet and use up say, 250 extra calories per day through exercise, that means 5,250 calories per week, or 1.5 pounds lost per week. It's not that hard, you just have to do it!

Some simple ways to cut the calories is to stop putting sugar in your coffee, eat fruit, vegetables or a lean protein for your afternoon snack instead of a pastry or candy bar, or cut sweets completely out of your diet except for one dessert per week.

You can also make simple changes like using mustard instead of mayonnaise or salad dressing on your sandwiches, or eating soups with clean broths instead of cream soups. Once you look at your eating habits, you'll most likely be able to find many good ways to cut out those extra calories without missing them. And of course, you can simply cut down on your portion sizes.

Go back to Chapter 3: Healthy Eating, and review portion sizes, and choices for healthier, lower fat and calorie foods. Take a look again at the food pyramid, too. This will help you discover how to create healthy meals and snacks that offer great nutrition, without adding lots of calories and fat that will land on the belly.

Do plan your meals and snacks ahead. Don't wait until you're starving and willing to eat a whole bag of chips just to put something in your stomach. Take time to plan what you'll eat.

You can find lots of great recipe books for dieters that offer delicious and easy to prepare recipes that cut out the calories and fat and still let you feel like you're eating great food. You can also search online for recipes that are wonderful for people like us who want to eat healthy and happy, but lose weight, too.

Eat foods that are high in fiber. Fiber fills you up faster and keeps you feeling full longer. And you can find tons of high fiber foods that aren't high in calories. These include:

- Wholegrain cereals (without added sugar)
- Whole grain breads and pastas
- Chickpeas
- Fresh fruits and vegetables of all sorts

Drink water! Lots and lots of it! Water is essential for your health and it helps keep you from bloating. If you drink plenty of water, your body will begin to be able to flush out toxins and even fat more easily.

A Failure to Plan Is a Plan for Failure

A failure to set goals won't help you lose weight. Goal setting is one tool that will help to turn your weight loss efforts into weight loss success!

Everyone knows that it's nearly impossible to get where you want to be without a map to get there, right? This is what goal setting is about. Setting goals in the form of an ultimate goal, broken down into smaller goals, is the map you'll create to get the body you're dreaming of.

But not everyone knows how to set effective goals that will help him or her reach that ultimate goal. It's not enough just to say, "I'm going to lose 40 pounds and get a six-pack." You have to create a very specific ultimate goal, and then specific milestones to reach along the way.

So your goals might look something like this:

Ultimate Goal: Lost 40 pounds in 25 weeks; define abs to the point that I am happy to show them off, tone the rest of my body so that everything is much firmer, reduce the look of cellulite on my thighs, and be able to wear skinny jeans without a blob of fat rolling over the top.

That's a tall order, but it's fairly specific. You know what you're shooting for.

But you'll need to add milestones to this goal, so you have smaller goals to shoot for and reach and then feel motivated to shoot for the next milestone.

Depending on your own self-motivation, you might make milestones pretty close together, to keep yourself going, or you might spread them out a bit. They might look like this:

Month One Goal: Lose 6 pounds by reducing your caloric intake by 500 – 750 calories a day. Exercise each day for 30 minutes (combination of cardio and abdominal focused exercise) to further use up another 150 - 250 calories per day. Explore new low-fat and low calorie recipes.

Month Two Goal: Lose another 6 pounds for a total of 12 pound lost. Continue with eating and exercise plan. Work up to more advanced levels of exercise and add interval training, creating a more intense workout and the possibility of burning more calories and fat slightly quicker weight loss. Clothes will be getting loose now!

This is how you set goals.

You might want to make your milestones closer together, like every two weeks. That's fine. Remember that your milestones should challenge you, but be reachable, so that you'll feel encouraged and motivated to keep

going. If your milestones are too hard, you could get discouraged and give up!

Also be sure that your ultimate goal is realistic. If you have it in your mind that you're going to look like a movie star when you're done, you might need a reality check! It's not that it's impossible, but remember that they have plastic surgery readily available to do all sorts of nips and tucks.

They have personal trainers who help them work out – sometimes for several hours a day! And they're used to living in a world where black coffee and a cigarette is considered to be a meal (no, this is not a good way to lose weight!).

It's been said that many of our most loved female entertainers eat no more than about 900 calories a day in order to stay super skinny and to look like we apparently think they should. First of all this is difficult to do, and second, it's not healthy as a long-term way to lose or maintain weight.

Trust me, if you follow the program I'm giving you in this book, you'll look awesome when you get to your ultimate goal, but you still have to be reasonable with yourself. Get a reality check and remember that you want to be healthy and happy, along with trim, and the owner of a great set of abs.

Don't be afraid to set goals and milestones. These act as great motivators and are wonderful for helping you to get to where you want to go. And remember that setting goals is a great way to accomplish anything, whether it's weight loss or another life accomplishment.

Tools and Support for Weight Loss

When you're in the middle of trying to lose weight, it can be very helpful to have some tools handy to help you feel motivated and keep on track. I like to picture a “motivational tool box” that can be kept handy to help you keep track of how things are going and to give you a lift when you need one.

The tool box doesn't need to be a literal box, but you could keep all of your dieting tools together in a box or a drawer – it's up to you.

For weight loss, there are several tools that are available to you that can help. You might choose to use all of them or only a couple of them. Either

way is fine, but most people do like to have some helpful tools handy to make things easier.

Among the tools you might use are:

A food journal – This is an essential for when you're beginning your weight loss program and also for keeping motivated during and even after, when you're working to maintain your weight.

Your food journal can be a simple notebook or a fancy journal that you purchase at a specialty shop. You can even have a food journal on your computer or keep one online.

The food journal is used to track what you eat, how you felt before and after you ate, the situation, your mood, the time, the setting, and any other information that might help you to pin down your reasons and motivations for your eating habits and also to see where you're making progress.

For some, the food journal is great for identifying when bad eating habits creep in and then for making decisions about how to head off future problems.

Photos – How about putting some before photos in your motivational toolbox? Then as you progress, you can take photos and place them in the toolbox as well so you can see how you're doing. This can serve as a great way to feel encouraged and motivated. Photos also work wonderfully on the refrigerator.

Affirmations and quotes – To some, this is a goofy tool, but it can work wonders for many. Most of us have our own things we say to ourselves to encourage ourselves. Why not gather up your favorite quotes and affirmations related to staying motivated, believing in yourself, good health, confidence, etc, and keep them where you can read and repeat one a day as a motivational tool?

Rewards – No motivational toolbox is going to be complete without some form of reward for when you reach a goal or milestone. These rewards could be tangible things that you've put away for yourself, or ideas for things you can do for yourself when you reach a milestone – like taking yourself out for a manicure, or purchasing that pair of running shoes you've been wanting, or buying some tickets to a ball game or concert that you've been looking forward to.

An exercise journal – You can incorporate your exercise journal into your food journal, but it could get a bit disorganized. If you like, you can have a separate exercise journal that details what you did for exercise each day, for how long, how you felt before, during and after and what results you're seeing from your exercise efforts.

This is a great tool for determining what's working as far as the type of exercise you're doing, and when and how you're doing it. It will also let you know if you need to make some adjustments.

Something else, another tool, you should have is support. A support circle won't fit into your toolbox, but can make a big difference in your success with weight loss and exercise. Not everyone needs or wants to bring other people into their fitness project, but many of us do.

Get one or more friends together as your support circle. These are people who will help you stay on track, gently call you out when you're not following your plan, and help you stay encouraged and motivated.

You want people you can call on to give you friendly support, not belittle you or be negative towards you – this won't help the situation.

Sometimes it works wonderfully to get together with another person who is working to lose weight and get in shape – you can do it together and serve as each other's encouragement and support. As with many situations in life, it's much easier to reach your goals with the help of a friend or group that offers positive support, ideas and encouragement.

Chapter 5: Burn That Fat

One of the reasons you're reading this book is that you hope to learn how to rid yourself of the excess fat you're carrying around on various parts of your body. You already know that you need to burn it off in some way, either by eating less food so that your body is forced to use it for energy, or by working it off by exercising and creating the need to use the fat for energy.

There are some things that you need to understand about fat and how the body uses it before we continue on because this knowledge will help you do all you can to help your body use up that excess fat. It's time to look at metabolism, what fat is and how the body uses it, how to get the body to use more of it, and other important topics related to fat burning.

What's the Big Deal About Metabolism?

Metabolism is a word you've heard plenty of times in relation to dieting and weight loss. People complain that their metabolism is slow and that they can't lose weight because of it. But what is metabolism?

Simply put, metabolism is the amount of energy (in the form of calories) that your body uses to keep itself going. Everything you do – walk, sleep, read, web-surf, work, all requires your body to burn calories. Your metabolic rate has to do with how quickly and efficiently you burn those calories (stored up energy).

Metabolism is affected by what your body is made of. This means how much fat you have and how much muscle you have. The more muscle you have, the more calories your body needs to keep itself going because muscle uses more calories than fat uses.

People who have a lower percentage of body fat, and thus, a higher percentage of muscle have a higher metabolism than people who are less muscular, with more fat.

Now if you're overweight and out of shape, you might be panicking right now. But you can stop panicking because there is a way to fix the situation. As you begin your program of weight loss and muscle building, your metabolism rate is going to increase, meaning that you're going to burn more fat! And the more fat you burn and muscle you build, the more your metabolic rate will increase. And on and on!

Metabolism, even if it's slow right now, is not your enemy and you can make it into one of your best friends simply by following a healthy, low-fat and low-calorie diet and getting proper exercise every single day.

What Is Fat and How Does It Convert to Energy?

The fat that we carry around on our bodies is not really produced or made by the body. The number of fat cells that you have (which are called adipocytes), come with you when you're born and are cells that have the distinct job of storing fat.

The body doesn't make new fat cells, it just fills them up – they are storage units for energy (the energy being in the form of fat). The way fat gets into these cells is pretty straightforward.

You eat something and your body breaks whatever it is that you've eaten into smaller parts – fats, proteins, carbohydrates, etc. Depending upon how much energy your body expends, the fat might get used very quickly, or it might get stored to be used at a later time.

Some stored fat is good for your body believe it or not, because it helps to protect internal organs and it's also great for helping many body systems function correctly.

But when more fat is stored than what the body needs for energy, protection or proper functioning, it just sits there on your hips or belly or wherever looking unsightly. So the idea is to get the body to use up that fat that it's stored for later use.

When the body needs energy and has to go to the fat cells to get some fat that's been stored up, a chemical process takes place that basically turns the fat contained in the fat cell into fatty acids that can be used for energy by muscles.

The process is rather complicated (what body function isn't), but the fat ends up in a form that can travel out of the fat cell, through the blood stream and to the areas where it's needed to serve as fuel.

Why Can't I Just Burn Fat Off of One Spot?

You've heard of spot reducing. It's where you lose weight in one spot – your waist, maybe your butt, or your thighs – wherever you think you need to lose, you do spot reduction. You burn the fat off that one spot.

Nope. Sorry, it can't happen.

Fat loss occurs over the entire body. When fat is used from the fat cells that store it, it's removed from cells over the whole body, not just in one area, no matter how much you exercise that area or how much you plead with your body just to use the fat from this of that area, fat is removed from fat cells distributed everywhere.

As I discussed earlier, your body is born with a certain number of fat cells. It's true that they do tend to be more prominent in certain areas of your body. But when your body starts to burn fat, all fat cells start to lose what they've stored up, not just some of them. This means that you'll lose fat from everywhere on your body, not just the spots that you think are fat.

The end result is that your entire body becomes trimmer. Sure you might still feel that you have too much flesh in one spot or another, but that comes from your genetics. If you lose weight everywhere and exercise to that what is left is firm and toned, you're still going to look fantastic!

How to Burn Fat in 30 Minutes a Day

Now comes the fun part. You're eating less and what you're eating is sensible, right? You've embarked on a new and healthy diet plan that reduces your fat and calorie intake, while still providing you with the nutrients you need to stay healthy and strong. Now it's time to start burning fat.

The one and only way you can burn that fat off your body is to work it off. This means exercise. If you've been a couch potato for a while now, you might be dreading this part, but let me tell you – you're going to be so happy once you get going! You'll feel better about yourself, and you'll feel healthier and more energized. And of course, before long, you'll start looking better too.

You're going to be alternating your fat burning workouts with workouts that target your core muscles. Each day, seven days a week, you're going to devote 30 minutes to exercise.

To burn fat, you need to do cardio exercise, which will occur every other day. This works your heart and lungs and gets every part of your body involved. Your metabolism will increase and your body will use the energy stored in it to keep moving and to support the higher metabolism rate.

In order to get the most out of cardio, you have to mix low, medium and high intensity exercise.

High intensity cardio gets your heart working to about 75 – 85 % of your maximum heart rate. During a high intensity workout, you'll feel very challenged. You'll be able to talk, but too breathless to hold a very long conversation.

A high intensity workout can really help with fat burning. But you don't want to do a high intensity workout each time you work out. It's better to leave the high intensity workouts to 1 time per week.

A medium intensity workout is what you're going to do about once or twice a week. This kind of cardio workout will bring your heart rate to about 60 – 70 % of your maximum heart rate, and you'll be able to carry on a conversation, even though it will still be harder than if you're sitting on your sofa doing nothing. A medium intensity cardio workout is still very effective for burning fat.

Finally, you'll want to through a low intensity workout into the weekly mix. These workouts are more comfortable than medium or high intensity workouts, but can still be very effective in the fight against too many calories and too much fat.

Low intensity workouts bring your heart rate to about 50 – 55% of your maximum heart rate, and you'll do this 1 time per week.

So your cardio workout schedule is going to look something like this:

Week One:

Monday – Medium Intensity

Wednesday – High Intensity

Friday – Low Intensity

Week Two:

Sunday – Medium Intensity

Tuesday – High Intensity

Thursday – Low Intensity

Saturday – Medium Intensity

On your “off” days from your fat burning cardio workouts, you'll be doing your ab and core strengthening workouts. These, combined with your low-fat, low calorie eating habits, will bring about a newer, slimmer, more toned and tightened looking you.

What Types of Cardio Workouts Are High Intensity?

Generally, most cardio workouts can be brought to a high intensity level – walking, biking, jogging, running, swimming, dancing and kick-boxing, among others can all work, and remember that because we're all different, what is high intensity for you might not be the same as for someone else. If the workout is making you sweat and making it hard for you to have much of a conversation beyond a few words, it's high intensity.

You don't have to have special equipment to have a high intensity workout. If you want to pick up a fun dance or aerobic DVD, then do it. If you love riding your bike, just kick things up a notch or two. When walking, don't just stroll – pick up the pace and get those arms pumping, or take it up to a jog.

Keep up the high level of intensity for 30 minutes. If you can't do 30 minutes yet, do as much as you can and work up to that 30-minute goal. Do the best you can.

How About Medium Intensity?

For a medium level of intensity, you can choose the same exercises, but just take things at a slightly slower pace. Again, you don't need any special equipment. Remember that a medium intensity workout is going to make you breath harder, sweat, and feel challenged, but you'll still be able to hold a conversation.

If you want to challenge yourself a little more, make the middle few minutes of your medium intensity workout more challenging by going to high intensity. This helps use up some extra calories and burns a bit more fat.

You can also get a nice medium intensity workout by using a good Pilates or Yoga DVD, or maybe a low impact aerobics DVD.

And Low Intensity?

On the day you do your low intensity cardio training, you're basically giving your body a little rest from all the other heavy-duty activity you've been engaged in for the other 6 days of the week.

But you're still working on it, and that's important. Even lower intensity cardio is going to burn fat, especially if you've been dedicated to following through with your workouts on the other 6 days.

Low intensity workouts can be taking a walk at a leisurely pace, going for a long, slow ride on your bike, doing a light yoga routine, swimming some easy laps in the pool, gardening, walking the dog, washing the car (by hand – not by driving it through the car wash), or any number of light activities that still get your body moving and your heart rate elevated.

Now that you have an understanding of the differences between high, medium and low intensity cardio workouts and when to do them, there is one more thing that is important to know about burning fat: you have to be very consistent in your efforts.

If you aren't, you're not going to get the results you want. When you exercise on a regular basis, and in this case that means 30 minutes a day, 7 days week, your body becomes more efficient at burning fat. What happens is that you are more able to deliver oxygen to every cell of your body and that helps the cells burn fat better.

Also, because your circulation improves with regular exercise, the fatty acids in your body become more readily available for burning as fuel, and your body can create energy from the fuel you give it more efficiently.

I've mentioned plenty of outside activities for getting your cardio exercise. That's easy when the weather is good, but if you live in an area where winters are cold or the summers are unbearably hot, you might want to invest in a quality treadmill or stationary bike or other piece of cardio exercise equipment for your workouts when the weather is just too awful to go outside.

Interval Training: It's Like Having a Secret Weapon

Perhaps you've heard of interval training. I actually suggested that you include it in your medium intensity workouts now and then, but I didn't call it interval training.

Interval training is a way to exercise where you periodically begin to exercise at a more intense rate than what you're doing in your main workout, even if only for a minute or two. This makes your body go into a higher gear, and increases it's ability to burn calories and fat by leaps and bounds.

Interval training is easy to do. Just pick up the pace – walk or bike faster or take a route that leads you up a hill. Find a way to make what you're doing more intense, faster, more challenging or harder.

Ideally, when you engage in interval training, you should start out as normal and then push things up a level for 5 minutes or so and then go back to the original intensity. You can do this once or several times in your workout, and do it once a week or with each cardio session. It's up to you.

Interval training adds some excitement and variety to your workouts and gives your body an immense boost in the fat burning department, so try to throw it into the mix as often as possible.

Chapter 6: Tighten and Define Your Abs

Now we're really getting down to the bottom line – you want to know how to get tight abs that are flat, toned and sexy! The fat's melting off and now the abs are ready for sculpting.

As I've already mentioned numerous times, you can't just do some crunches and expect the results you're looking for. You have to follow a different formula - one that involves the right eating choices, fat burning exercise and finally, methods to shape up your belly.

At some time in your past, you might have thought that all it would take to get toned abs is a tons of crunches a day, or maybe the use of one of those abdominal machines you've seen on the infomercials. It doesn't work like that.

Here's an important tip to keep in mind when you're working out - either by doing your core workout, or your cardio workout: Remember to breathe. Especially when you're doing your core workout, there might be a temptation to hold your breath. But don't let yourself do that. Just keep breathing.

When you're doing crunches, exhale when you come up, and inhale on the way back down. The same goes for pushups. Your exhale falls on the part that causes you to expend the most energy or that is hardest to do.

When you're doing an exercise that requires you to stay in one position for several seconds, just remember to keep breathing steadily.

The Core and Why You Have to Work All of It

You're working on burning fat and blasting your belly into top shape, so your focus is probably on your abdominals. That makes sense. But before you begin, you need to understand what's in the belly area that you have to work, because it's more than just the ab muscles that are in the front.

The way to get toned abs is to work the entire group of core muscles, the ones that wrap all around your midsection. Yes, it's the toned abdominal muscles that create a six-pack, but it's the core muscles that make that six pack look right. You can't have just your rectus abdominis muscles (the ones in the front) looking great because by themselves, they will look funny.

The core muscles are the muscles that stabilize the trunk part of your body and help keep you straight. They protect your back and internal organs and they make you look much more attractive when they are fit.

The core muscles include not only the muscles in your abdominal area, but your back, your pelvic floor and your hips. There are even core muscles, such as the transverse abdominis, that are hidden behind other muscles, but that are essential for the “whole package” to look good and function correctly.

So when you think about working on your abs, you should really be thinking about working on your core. Having a core that is strong and in top shape is going to help give you the abs you're dreaming of.

Why Can't I Just Do Crunches?

While crunches do offer benefits, you can't really rely only on crunches to define your abs for a few different reasons.

One of the main reasons that you don't want to do only crunches to tone and define your belly are that you might end up with abs that look pretty good from the front, but that look extended out and paunchy from the side.

This comes from focusing on your rectus abdominus muscles (the ab muscles in the front), and nothing else. To get a lean, tight, all over look, you have to work all the muscle groups in that area including the transverse abdominis, which is a large muscle that holds the rectus abdominus, and the rest of the core muscles.

Doing a simple crunch or sit-up doesn't fully train your abdominal muscles to do what they were designed to do, which is to keep your spine straight and your help your body movements remain stable and secure.

When your ab muscles are fully trained in the right way, they not only provide this stability and security, but they also look awesome.

Along with working those groups, you can do your body good by doing exercises that you think benefit only other parts of your body. For example, pushups are good for helping you get a toned and slim waistline and belly because when you're doing the movement, you're also holding your core muscle groups taut.

It's an isometric form of exercise, meaning that it strengthens the muscle group simply by holding the muscles in a fixed position for a set amount of time. Exercises like the pushup can be considered a full body exercise. Your arms, shoulders, core muscle group, back and legs are challenged.

You can't get by with just doing crunches or traditional sit-ups because they only focus on one piece of the puzzle. You can do them, and you should do them. But you have to combine them with other important moves and forms of exercise to really get the kind of abs that you want.

What About That Ab Machine I Saw on the Infomercial?

Here's the lowdown on ab machines – those are the contraptions you see on the infomercials that show smiling, smoking hot models, working out on them and supposedly shedding pounds and fat, while developing abs that are incredible.

Those ab machines *do* work your abs. They do. But they do absolutely nothing when it comes to getting rid of the fat layer that you have over your abs that is covering up that six pack you're building. And you can get the same exact results from doing exercises at home, without a machine if you don't have the money.

Most people purchase those fancy machines thinking that somehow if the machine is sitting in their family room staring at them, they are going to feel more motivated to work out.

Or maybe they're thinking that somehow, someday, that machine is going to produce miracle abs and that's all they will have to do to lose weight and get in shape. Unfortunately, it's not true. And usually the machine just collects dust.

What Forms of Exercise Help to Tone Abs?

Here's something that you'll be happy to hear – there are lots of exercises that help you tone your abs, and all of your core muscles, strengthen your back, and indeed your whole body, and give you a sexy look. Let's start with the basics. The following exercises work your core muscles and require no special equipment at all:

Abdominal Bracing – This isn't so much an exercise as it is something that you can do anywhere, anytime to help strengthen your abs. It's simply the act of tightening the muscles in your middle section.

People do this when preparing to lift something heavy because it helps to protect the back. If you consciously do this as you go through your day, it acts as a kind of constant ab exercise.

The Basic Crunch – Even though crunches won't do it all, the crunch is still a useful exercise for strengthening and toning those abs. When doing crunches, pay close attention to form to be sure to protect your lower back and neck.

To do a basic crunch, lay flat on your back with your knees bent, feet on the ground and your hands at the side of your head. Now gently pull your abdominal muscles in and curl up.

Relax down. Be careful to not pull your head up with your hands. You can also do a crunch with your arms crossed over your chest and tucking in your chin – some prefer this position.

Work up to 100 crunches per workout. You don't have to do them all at once. You can do some in the beginning, then the middle and the end if you like.

Pushups – While pushups are thought of as an exercise for the upper body, they engage the abs and core and also the legs, so they accomplish many purposes.

To do a push up, you begin with your hands on the floor under your shoulders, body straight from head to your toes (which are on the floor) and stomach pulled in. Bend your elbows and lower yourself down to about 6 inches from the floor, and then back up.

Pushups are not easy to do, but with time, you'll gain strength and be able to do more. If straight pushups are too difficult at first, you can do them with your knees on the floor, still holding your body straight. Whether you're doing full pushups or beginner pushups, work up to three sets of 20 if you can.

The Plank – The Plank is a great way to get your abs and core in shape, but you have to do them correctly to get the most benefit.

You begin your plank in a similar position to the beginning of a pushup, except with your elbows on the floor instead of your hands. Lift your body off the floor, with only your forearms and toes touching the floor.

Keep your body in a straight line with your tummy pulled in and hold this straight position with only your elbows, forearms, hands and toes touching the floor. Hold for 20 – 45 seconds.

If you are unable to hold for at least 20 seconds, you can switch to an easier version of the Plank, which allows you to put your knees on the floor. Work up to the more advanced Plank. Try to do three sets on each side.

The Side Plank – This also works your core. Lie down on your side on the floor with your elbow under your shoulder, forearm flat on the ground. Your feet can be in one of two positions – the first is with your feet about 1.5 feet apart, one in front of the other, and the second is with your feet together.

The second position is more difficult than the first. Align your body into a straight line from your feet to your shoulders, pull in your belly and then lift yourself up off the floor. Hold for ten seconds and then lower. Switch to the other side. Try to do three sets on each side.

Lunges – Lunges help define your abs because they engage your abdominal muscles to help keep you balanced when you're performing the lunge.

To do a lunge, start out by standing tall with your tummy pulled in and your back straight. Simply step forward and bend your back knee down and your front knee forward (be sure it doesn't travel any further forward than in a line with your toes). Push back up with the strength of your legs. Repeat several times and then switch to the other side.

Your goal should be to do at least 20 – 30 repetitions on each leg.

Hip Lifts – This exercise works the muscles in the abdominal region, the back and also in your butt area.

To do a hip lift, lie on your back with your arms at your side, knees bent and feet about hips width apart. Slowly raise your hips off the floor, keeping your belly in. Be careful not to arch your back when you do this – keep it straight.

Hold for a few seconds, flattening your tummy, and then lower your back down to the floor slowly from the top of the back to your butt. Repeat this move several times. Try to work up to at least 20 hip lifts per workout.

V-sits – This is a more advance exercise for your ab area, and it's very effective. Even if you can only do one to begin with, stick with it and work up to more and more repetitions.

To do a V-sit, begin by sitting on the floor or your mat with your arms slightly behind you, hands flat on the ground and fingers pointing toward your feet. Your elbows should be slightly bent.

Your legs will be bent at the knee with your feet on the floor. Now slowly lean back on your hands, bending your elbows and as you do that, extend your legs out from your body.

Then lean forward and bring your legs back toward your chest, knees bent, and keeping your feet off the floor now. Stretch out and back in several times. Overtime, you should be able to do about 100 V-sits.

Squats – Squats work your lower body, and your core muscles. Squats are easy to do, and work well.

To do a squat, stand straight with your feet about shoulder width apart and your toes pointing slightly outward. Sit back, as if you're sitting down in a chair with your butt out. As you "sit" keep your tummy in, arms out in front for balance and your back straight, even though you'll be leaning slightly forward (remember that your butt is out as if you're getting ready to sit). Stand back up.

You should work up to a total of up to 100 squats.

Back Extensions – As you might guess, this is great for your back, but it also works other core muscles including your abs. To do the back extension, lie on the floor face down, legs straight and feet pointed.

Roll your shoulders back and extend your arms along your sides, towards your feet. Now lift your feet, head and shoulders off the floor or mat while pulling your abdominal muscles in. Hold for a few seconds and then relax down. You should work up to 10 – 12 repetitions of this exercise.

The Russian Twist – This exercise targets the side oblique muscle group, so you get trimmer and more toned at the sides of your midsection. This is an advanced move, but is worth working up to. Eventually, you should do three sets, which 10 – 12 repetitions for each set. Even if you only start with 8 – 10 repetitions and only one set, these will do your belly good.

To do the Russian Twist, lay flat on the floor or a mat with your knees bent, feet on the ground.

Hold your arms straight out in front of you, with your palms together. Now sit up so that your body and bent legs form a "V" shape. Twist to one side and then the other at the waist, still holding your arms straight out. Lie back down. That's one Russian Twist.

NOTE: Don't strain yourself doing these exercises. If at any time you feel pain beyond the kind that comes from raising your heart rate, breathing a little harder and challenging your muscles, stop and make sure you are in correct position. If you're a beginner, you should use the beginner positions when they are suggested until you are familiar and comfortable with the exercise.

As always, if you have any worries, have had previous injuries that could be negatively affected by doing any of these exercises, or questions, consult with your doctor.

Toning, Tightening and Defining Your Abs in 30 Minutes a Day

You know the truth about getting great abs. Exercises are a part of it, but nutrition is going to make a big difference too. After all, you can exercise your core every day and night, but if you still have a big roll of flab covering them up, it won't matter.

As long as you're practicing good nutrition and working on your weight loss, you can work on those abs and feel comfortable in the knowledge that you're going to be showing of a great midsection soon.

So let's look at what your ab building plan is going to look like:

First, you need to incorporate each of the ab, core and whole body exercises that have been listed and described for you in this chapter into your workout routine 3 to 4 times per week. You can do it every other day if you like, giving those muscles a rest in between (the in between days is when you'll do your fat burning cardio workouts).

You should be able to fit an entire series of ab and core exercises in to about one half hour. If you start doing lots and lots of repetitions, you might go over the half hour a little bit, but not much because you'll be doing the exercises in a series where you go from one to the next with little or no break between.

On the other hand, if you are just beginning and not able to accomplish all the repetitions and sets of each exercise, you might fall short of a full half hour. If this happens, take the last few minutes that you have left and go for a quick walk, or dance in your living room, or walk in place – find some activity with which to spend the rest of your half hour working your body.

When you do your exercises in an continuous manner like this, you'll find that you actually get a bit of a cardio workout too, so that's a bonus to your fat burning efforts.

Here's what your ab workout is going to look like:

On an “ab” day, you'll not be doing your cardio workout. It's best to try to workout at the same time everyday, just so that you don't forget to do it. It will become habit if you have a certain time scheduled. If you can't do it that way, keep a calendar or other way to remind yourself to do your ab workout routine.

You can use a mat for your workouts or just the floor – either is fine. Dress comfortably in clothes that are loose fitting so you can move. You'll want to warm your body up a little by walking in place or even dancing for 2 or 3 minutes. Just to get all your muscles warmed up and loose.

Now start into your routine. You can follow the exercises just they are listed or create your own sequence to follow. Just as long as you do them, it doesn't matter what order you do them in.

Follow your workout with a few minutes of stretching – this will help relax your muscles and balance the tension in them and it also feels great.

As a beginner, you might only be able to do a few repetitions of each move. Don't worry. Do as much as you can, then take a break and start again – you should feel that you've worked yourself and challenged yourself each time you do any exercise, but you don't need to do it until you feel completely exhausted and in pain. Although again, you need to have the feeling that you've worked that muscle group.

If you want to be able to show of a great set of abs, you need to commit yourself to 3 – 4 days per week of ab exercises – one full half hour. If you can do this, you'll see results. As you lose weight and burn fat through your healthy diet and your fat burning workouts, the abs you're building will start to reveal themselves.

If the ab exercise routine begins to get too easy, you can add intensity by using dumbbells with certain moves, such as your lunges and squats, and even make your crunches more intense by holding a lightweight dumbbell across your chest or behind your head.

You will want to switch up your routine a bit, to keep your muscles guessing as to what's coming next. This is important because if you do the exact same thing over and over, you won't get the same benefit as if you switch things up a bit.

You may also want to add intensity on alternating days. As a beginner, you can still add intensity, but just at a lower level than you will when you are more advanced. You can hold light weights when doing lunges and squats or even crunches if you want to add intensity.

Don't forget that some exercises have a beginner's position and an advanced position. If you've started out using beginner positions and they are getting easy for you, try the advanced positions and see what happens. Here is a sample workout schedule that you can use for getting those abs in top shape:

Week One:

Sunday

Basic Crunch
Pushups
Plank
Side Plank
Hip Lifts
V-sits
Back Extensions
Russian Twist
Lunges
Squats

Tuesday

Squats (add intensity with light weights)

Plank
Pushups
Side Plank
Back Extensions

Week Two:

Monday

Basic Crunch
Pushups
Plank
Side Plank
Hip Lifts
V-sits
Back Extensions
Russian Twist
Lunges
Squats

Wednesday

Squats (add intensity with light weights)

Plank
Pushups
Side Plank
Back Extensions

Lunges (add intensity with light weights)

Russian Twist

V-sits

Pushups

Crunches (add intensity with light weight)

Thursday

Basic Crunch

Pushups

Plank

Side Plank

Hip Lifts

V-sits

Back Extensions

Russian Twist

Lunges

Squats

Saturday

Squats (add intensity with light weight)

Plank

Pushups

Side Plank

Back Extensions

Lunges (add intensity with light weight)

Russian Twist

V-sits

Pushups

Crunches (add intensity with light weight)

Lunges (add intensity with light weights)

Russian Twist

V-sits

Pushups

Crunches (add intensity with light weight)

Friday

Basic Crunch

Pushups

Plank

Side Plank

Hip Lifts

V-sits

Back Extensions

Russian Twist

Lunges

Squats

If you follow an ab and core workout schedule such as this, you'll be sure to get all you need in about 30 minutes a day.

On the days that you're not scheduled for working on your abs, you'll be working on fat burning and toning with cardio and other forms of exercise.

Tools You Can Use to Help Blast Those Abs Into Shape

All the exercises that are listed in this chapter can be done using no extra equipment at all. They will work that way, and you'll see results. This is great

for those that are on a budget or simply don't want to go to the trouble of using extra stuff.

However, if you're interested in the type of tools that might be helpful, here are some great ideas:

Weights – I've touched briefly on this topic already. You can purchase some lightweight dumbbells (1 to 3 pounds) pretty inexpensively. These add a bit of intensity to your workout and even though they are light, can make a difference. If you don't want to spend any money, get out a couple cans of fruit, vegetables or soup and use them for a bit of added weight. You can also use a lightweight medicine ball (also known as an exercise ball or fitness ball) for the same purpose.

Mat – For those who don't like lying on the floor and want some sort of barrier, an exercise or yoga mat works nicely. They have a slightly sticky surface that helps make your moves more stable – no slipping around.

Balance Ball – Lots of people use balance balls for doing crunches, pushups and back extensions. With a balance ball, the level of intensity increases, as does the level of difficulty. If you're just beginning, take time to learn how to use the balance ball correctly and with proper form.

Don't forget about your exercise journal. I've suggested this as part of your motivational toolbox already and you should be tracking your ab workouts and progress in your exercise journal. This is an essential tool for motivating yourself and seeing the progress you're making.

The Home Gym

One last thing I'd like to point out in regards to both your ab and core workout and your cardio workouts – for any type of exercise you'll be doing indoors, whether it's your ab and core workout series, or an aerobics DVD for a cardio workout, you need to create a home gym.

Now don't panic! I know that most of us don't have an extra room in the house that can be just for exercise. In fact, most of us end up exercising in our family room or living room, or even the bedroom. That's fine – there's nothing wrong with that.

But you still need to make a space for yourself to move around in and to get the most from your exercises. This can be a temporary space that you set up and take down each time you work out, or it can be permanent, depending upon how much space you have available to use.

And of course, if you are lucky enough to have a room to devote to your fitness efforts, that's great!

To create your own home gym or place to workout, you simply need to make sure you have an area large enough to comfortably move around in, and then the things you need to make the workout effective.

Some people like to watch TV or listen to music when they're exercising, so you will want to be near the TV or stereo. Some prefer a quiet atmosphere, with some privacy, so in that case, the bedroom might work better for you, or you might want to schedule your exercise time when no one else is around to disturb you.

Your in-home workout area can be one where all of your DVD's, weights, mat and other workout equipment is stored together, giving you easy access to everything at a moments notice. You might even want to have a clean towel nearby for when you work up a sweat.

The area you use for your workouts should be pleasant and neat. This is because your surroundings will make either a positive or negative impact on your mood and motivation.

Who wants to exercise in an area that looks like a mess and feels chaotic. You'll be doing your workout and thinking about the mess you have to clean up when you're done! Or if you're a naturally messy person, you might not have enough room to move around in an unhindered manner. Needless to say, a clean, neat and comfortable setting is important.

Likewise, you may find it much easier to complete your workout if others aren't interrupting you. For this reason, it is nice to have a more private place to go to for exercise, but if that's not possible, you might want to schedule exercise sessions before everyone else wakes, or when the children are at school or down for a nap, or when your significant other is out running errands or walking the dog.

Chapter 7: The Final Results and Maintenance

If you've read through this entire eBook and have been waiting to get here to start your weight loss and flat abs program, it's time to get to work! If you've already started making the changes needed, good job – keep going.

The target you're shooting for is a healthy, lean and toned body, along with flat abs and the kind of self-confidence that can only come from knowing that you look great. Depending upon your fitness level and your weight when you start, it might take a matter of months to get where you want to go. Don't let that stop you. If you don't ever start, you won't ever get there.

Experts say that the best way to lose weight is through both diet and exercise and that you should have a target of 1 to 2 pounds per week. This might not seem like much and you might feel that if you really cut back on your food intake and exercised even more, you could increase this rate drastically. And that's probably true.

But the bottom line is that you need to lose weight at a pace that is comfortable for your body and let's you maintain your health. You are much, much, much more likely to keep that weight off if you lose it at a reasonable, steady rate than if you lose it at a ridiculously fast rate.

And why would you go to the trouble of losing weight and working out to tone your abs and the rest of your body if you can't keep the weight off?

Your final results aren't going to look like anyone else's final results. Remember that you still might not look just like your favorite star. They have an advantage that we don't – it's called airbrushing.

As I mentioned earlier in this book, for a woman to maintain a weight like that of most of our most famous female entertainers, she would have to keep her caloric intake to 900 or fewer calories a day!

That's just not healthy. It doesn't matter what Hollywood says!

So, whether you're a woman or a man, your final results are going to be based on your own body's make up, and where you started as far as weight and fitness level.

You can definitely drop the pounds and burn the fat. You can definitely get abs that you feel proud of and are even willing to show off at the beach. You can definitely get to a point where you love your body and you feel more confident and ready to face the world.

How to Maintain All That You've Gained

You've lost the weight and you have a nice, flat tummy with some awesome definition to it. Besides that, you've found that the rest of your body is looking pretty good too! Now it's time to go into maintenance mode.

It seems that for some, maintenance is just as daunting as the actual process of losing weight and shaping up. But really, it's quite simple to keep your body where it's at, now that it's where you want it to be. Just like losing weight and getting into beach-ready shape, it will take discipline and dedication, but it will be well worth it.

Your first step to weight and fitness maintenance is to continue to keep it healthy. This means eating sensibly and with your health in mind, and continuing to exercise on a daily basis.

Following the same basic eating plan that you used to lose weight is a good place to start. You don't need to keep losing weight, so your intake may change a bit, but you do need to remember that especially for keeping the belly at bay, you have to keep the momentum going with regulating your fat intake.

We've talked about fat. You do need some fats in your diet, or your body won't function right and your health will suffer. So that's okay – just keep eating the right kinds of fats and avoid the wrong kinds like you'd avoid a big hairy spider or a brain-eating zombie or driving over a bunch of broken glass in a parking lot.

We've also talked about all of the other food groups, what's healthy to drink, and why it's important to remember to balance everything out. If you want to stay trim and firm, your foundation is going to be proper nutrition.

Does this mean that you can't ever have a piece of birthday cake again, or a plate of nachos? No. But it's a trade off. You trade that big piece of cake for a nice firm belly. Have a small piece of cake or a few bites of the nachos.

Keep your diet healthy. That's a huge part of how you're going to get to your goal and how you'll stay there.

Besides the healthy diet, you must also continue with a healthy exercise plan. One that involves exercising each and every day. If you want flat abs, you're going to have to commit yourself to that. Thirty minutes out of every day of your life is reasonable to expect.

Continue with the program you used to get in shape, which will involve cardio workouts, strengthening moves, stretching and working with weights. If you notice that things aren't staying in the shape you'd like, ramp it up a bit.

People who keep their bodies in top shape are those who are willing to spend time each day moving it and working it.

Besides focusing on your abs, remember that you need to approach your fitness in multiple ways. Work your abs, but keep the rest of your body in mind, too. Weight loss and a toned look are only achievable and maintainable when you work all your muscle groups, firming your entire body.

The basis of maintenance is also going to mean focusing on healthy habits. This will help you feel good, resist disease and look fantastic.

Your Workout Routines

We've discussed the need to vary your workouts while you're in the process of getting into better shape. It's the same when maintaining your form. Your body, as well as your mind needs to stay interested, not bored, in what's going on.

Be sure to continue to follow the guidelines we've already covered for varying your workouts. This will keep your muscle groups "on their toes."

- Create a well-rounded program with enough variety in it to keep your body and mind challenged.
- When doing cardio activities, vary the distance, speed and intensity of your workouts.
- For strengthening workouts that may or may not involve using light weights, make some workouts more intense.

When You Feel Weak and Tempted to Be Lazy or Eat Poorly

It's inevitable that this is going to happen. You're going to say to yourself, "I'm going to eat that whole cheesecake and I'm not going to exercise today and I don't care." It's a rare person who doesn't feel this way at some point during weight loss and shaping up, and then also when they are in maintenance mode. We're humans – we get tempted to do things that might not be the best for us.

Here is my advice to you:

First, don't fool yourself and assume that you're never going to feel tempted to overeat, eat the wrong things or sit on the sofa and watch TV when you should be exercising. Instead, assume that it will happen and have a plan to head off temptation.

When those moments come along, get out your box of motivational tools. Better yet, make your motivational tools so visible that you can't help but see them on your way to get the cheesecake or when you're sitting in front of the TV.

Take a look at what you've gathered. Your before and after photos. Your journals. Your list of quotes and affirmations. The size tag from your fat pants and from your slim pants. Whatever you've put together to help yourself toward your goal. Your goal now is to remain healthy, slim and toned – not to eat a bag of chips while sitting on your front porch.

But what happens if you give in to temptation?

First off, don't make yourself feel more guilty or suffer more than is necessary. Yes, you need to call yourself out for your mistake. You need to have a good talk with yourself and you need to make an effort to understand why you did what you did.

Then you need to get back on track. Forgive yourself and stop beating yourself up and begin again this very minute. You can still workout today. You can find ways to cut a few calories and a bit of fat out of your meals tomorrow to help offset the damage you did today (just don't go overboard – remember to keep it healthy).

If it will help, write about it in your journal. Maybe you had a really lousy day at work and you just felt that eating a carton of ice cream would make you feel better. Did it? Keep track of the things that trigger these problem behaviors so you can head them off in the future.

The Motivational Toolbox

The toolbox has been covered in other parts of this book, but it's worth revisiting. Most of us need to have reminders of why we're doing what we're doing, and different things will work for different people. Consider the following for your motivational toolbox:

- Photos of you before you started working on your weight loss and fitness goals and then photos of your progress and you when you reach your final goal.
- A food and exercise journal.
- An experiences, feelings, moods and situations journal.
- A list of people you can turn to for support and positive encouragement.
- A list of quotes and affirmations that help you feel strong, confident and able.
- Rewards

What to Avoid From Here on Out

Your new body is going to demand that you avoid certain things pretty much for the rest of your life. We already talked about avoiding giving in to the temptations of foods that are a) unhealthy and b) going to contribute to weight gain. That's a basic law of maintaining a slim waistline.

We also talked about the fact that you need to avoid being lazy when it comes to your workouts. You need to get exercise every day for the rest of your life (a day off once in a blue moon or if you're sick or injured is acceptable).

But what else should you avoid?

One thing that you need to strive to keep away from is people who might negatively affect your progress. This might seem harsh because often it's friends and family who say, "Oh, it's not going to hurt you to have another helping of lasagna."

But the truth is that if you give in every time someone encourages you to join them in their eating, drinking or other habits, you might be harming your efforts at maintaining your newly found slim shape.

Keep in mind that in order to live healthier, you might need to see less of or hang out less with certain people who might encourage you to slip into your old and unhealthy habits. This doesn't mean that you have to cut them out of your life though.

Another type of person to avoid or limit your exposure to is people who just make you feel bad – whether it's bad about yourself or about life in general. Many of us overeat and get lazy and complacent when we have negative or angry feelings.

Try to surround yourself with people who are understanding and encouraging, and who won't try to tempt you to “be bad” (whether they realize they're doing it or not).

If there were spots (restaurants, pubs and bars, etc) that you used to visit, or habits you used to have that made you feel like eating things that aren't good for you, you will also want to avoid those and find new places and things to do where you're not so heavily required to rely on your willpower to overcome being tempted.

I know this section sounds like you're a drug addict trying to avoid starting up an old and harmful habit. In a way though, that's what's happening. Old habits of overeating, eating the wrong foods and inactivity are addicting and are harmful.

You're developing healthy new habits and a healthy, sleek new body. You're going to have to make and keep some changes in order to keep that healthy, great-looking body intact.

What If You Start to Gain Weight Again?

Your weight is going to fluctuate a little. If you go up a few pounds and then down a few pounds, that's fine. It's not a big deal. But if you start to go up a few pounds and then a couple more and then a few more, you're headed for trouble. Stop it before it gets out of hand!

There are a few things you must do if your weight begins to go up too much:

- Immediately go back to your diet plan – the one you used to lose weight. Be ruthless about this. Find out where you're overdoing it and put a stop to it!
- Ramp up your exercise. If you're on a maintenance plan of 30 minutes per day, add another 15 minutes or make your 30 minute workouts more intense.
- Get out that motivational toolbox and make use of it.
- Ask for help. If you are part of a support group or you and a friend or two are working together, sound the alarm and get some extra encouragement and support.
- If you begin to gain weight and your efforts to correct the situation aren't working, see your doctor to rule out any health problems.

What If You Get Sick or Have an Injury?

It's going to happen. You're going to be in the middle of your weight loss and fitness program or in maintenance mode and you're going to come down with a nasty cold or the flu or twist your ankle or pull a muscle.

The good news is that as you become healthier through eating right and getting plenty of the right kinds of exercise, you help decrease the risk of getting sick or having an injury because your immune system will be much stronger and your body will also be physically stronger and more able to protect itself from injuries. The bad news is that it can still happen.

So what if you find yourself in this situation?

If you've come down with an illness such as the flu, it's best to rest your body and allow it to heal itself. There is no need to stress it by pushing it with exercise. It needs its energy to fight the virus that's invaded it.

Keep up with the good nutrition because this will help your immune system win the battle more quickly and efficiently.

If you feel up to it, you can take a walk or go for a swim or a bike ride, but just don't overdo anything – your body seriously needs its energy right now. As you begin to feel better, you can gradually work your way back into your regular exercise routine.

If you become seriously ill and require the treatment of a doctor, you will also want to consult with your doctor or health care professional as to when you can start working out at full strength again.

If you've experienced an injury, you will need to pay special attention to not worsening the injury to the area involved. Often this only means that you have to adjust your workouts until the injury is fully healed.

Again, if the injury is such that you've had to seek medical treatment, you will need to consult with your doctor before you start to exercise that area again.

While it's disappointing that you may have to stop working out for a while due to illness or injury, it would be more disappointing if you made the situation worse by pushing yourself before your body is ready for the stress or strenuous exercise.

Keep up with your healthy eating plan and do what you can.

Become a Mentor to Help You Maintain

Sometimes the best way to help ourselves is to help someone else. This can be especially true when it comes to weight loss and fitness. If you've been there and done that, you can identify with the struggles that others experience on their own journey.

Once you've gotten to the point of having lost the weight that you set out to lose and created a body that is toned, featuring abs that anyone would be thrilled to have, you're in a position to help others create their own perfect body.

I'm not really suggesting that you suddenly advertise yourself as a fitness expert and become a "guru" for health and fitness. I'm suggesting that if the opportunity arises where you are able to help someone else reach their own goals by encouraging them, maybe by working out with them, and giving them some useful tips, you're not only helping them, you're going to be reinforcing in your own mind and your own life what you need to do to stay trim.

Helping others out makes you accountable for your actions. You can't tell someone else to get exercise if you're not doing it yourself. You can't give tips on how to eat right for weight loss, unless you're also following a healthy eating plan for weight loss or weight maintenance once you've lost your weight.

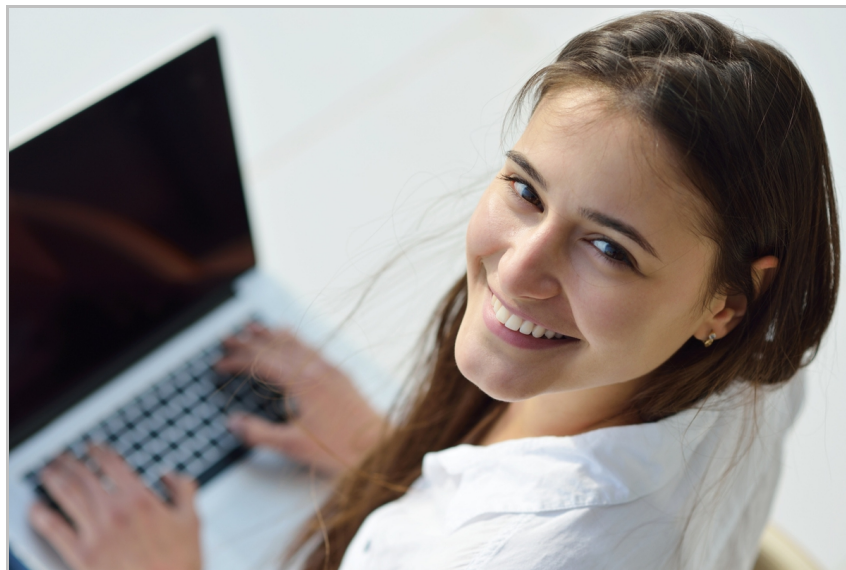
This is an incredibly effective way to keep yourself on track when it comes to maintaining your weight and your new and improved body.

The program I've given you isn't a miracle diet or a miracle set of 5 exercises to make you look like a star. It's a common sense program. Work it and you'll see the results. In fact, if you follow it, you'll see great results.

You can get fantastic abs and a toned body in 30 minutes per day – it's possible. But you have to commit yourself and be dedicated. You have to eat well – the right foods in the correct portions, if you want it to work.

Yes, you can blast fat and build abs in 30 minutes a day! You can have that beautiful body, more confidence and yes, better chances in today's job market, with dates and in relationships. You can be healthier and have a stronger immune system.

Have confidence in yourself to do this! It will be well worth the effort and time you put into it. It is truly an investment in yourself and your future.



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