



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
FAT LOSS

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INTRODUCTION

There is a lot of health and fitness information in the world. And I mean a LOT. Between scientists, trainers, and other people in the space, you can find information on nearly any health and fitness topic you can think of.

The amount of available information is incredible. But yet we still find ourselves wandering from one piece of advice to another, wondering if we will ever find the perfect answer.

I've got news for you, you won't find the perfect answer.

In order to find what you're looking for, you'll have to take the guidelines of what works and see how it applies in your life.

Unfortunately it's not as simple as taking a supplement, eating a certain amount of meals in the day, or working out a specific number of days in the week.

But the general guidelines that you will receive in this guide will work if you utilize them properly.

So, though it may not be extremely simple, don't for one second believe that long term fat loss is not something that is attainable for you. You can certainly make it happen.

You'll just need to put the principles to the test and be consistent to see what pays off for you.

Before we dive into the intricacies of fat loss, I want to remind you of something.

In this world, we are able to have things faster than ever before. Our world simply does not require much patience. If we want food, we reach into the pantry. If we want information, we type a few words into the search engine on our device.

We are also understood very well by marketers, and they know that we would much rather hear that we can have what we want sooner rather than later.

As a result, we've been "trained", so to speak, to focus on the short term when it comes to our fat loss goals.

You never hear someone say, "I want to be lean when I'm in my 50s." Instead, you hear "I want to lose 30 pounds in two months."

It is extremely easy to get focused on how you're going to lose the fat in the near future, and not even think about how you plan on keeping it off. No wonder we have so many yo-yo dieters in the United States.

I invite you to not only think about your health and fitness goals now, but also what your health and fitness goals are five, ten, and fifteen years from now. I also encourage you to think about how the approach you take now will impact your health and fitness down the road.

If there is one thing we know about losing fat and keeping it off, it's that it's a race meant for the tortoise, not the hare.

Be the tortoise.



FAT LOSS: BEHIND THE CURTAINS

We all know what fat loss looks like. We look leaner, tighter, more defined, skinner, thinner, however you want to word it.

But what is going on behind the scenes, under the appearance of this "new" body?

Let's find out.



FAT LOSS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

When we say "fat loss" what we think of is fat melting or burning from our body to never come back again. But that's not quite how it works.

We all have fat cells in our body. When we gain fat, those already existing fat cells increase. When we lose fat, those cells decrease in size.

In order for those cells to decrease in size, the body must have a need to break down the triglycerides and use them as energy. In order for the body to have that need, it must be taking in fewer calories in the day than it is consuming.

This means that you are burning more calories in the day than you are eating and drinking. This is called a calorie deficit.

There are many different elements that impact calories in vs. calories out, but when it's all said and done, fat loss comes down to eating fewer calories in the day than you burn.

CALORIES: HOW THEY COME IN AND HOW THEY COME OUT

Calories coming in is easy. The food and drinks we consume contain calories. Some foods contain more calories than others, but nearly everything we eat and drink contains calories.

But how do calories come out? How are calories burned?

Calories are burned a few different ways. We burn the most amount of calories by simply existing. In fact, roughly 60-70% of the calories we burn in the day are burned by simply existing. That is a LOT of our total daily calories. This is a good thing, and you'll see why later.

Another 10-30% of our calories burned are burned through activity. This includes any movement. This could be formal exercise, typing, folding clothes, walking the dog, whatever.

The other 10% or so are burned through digestion.

WHAT AFFECTS HOW CALORIES ARE BURNED?

There are many elements that affect calories burned, but the biggest contributors are our hormones. Hormones can change, imbalances can occur, and fat loss becomes increasingly difficult.

One of the most common threats to difficult fat loss is high cortisol. Chronically high levels of cortisol make it extremely difficult to lose fat and keep it off. Chronically high cortisol can come several ways, including chronic stress, poor sleep, balls to the wall workouts all week, or a combination of the three.

This is very common in the bootcamp world. Unfortunately, we've been taught to believe that the more we sweat, the more out of breath we are, and the more sore we get, the more effective the workout was.

As a result, people end up taking three, four, maybe even five high intensity classes per week. These people also tend to be individuals who are high stress and get poor sleep. A balls to the wall workout is the only thing that makes them feel alive. They NEED caffeine to feel remotely close to normal, they NEED that highly intense workout to even feel a little endorphin rush. This is a recipe for disaster.

In order to avoid chronically elevated levels of cortisol, be sure to get 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Implement a sleep routine to help your body wind down and get into a restful state.

Have a plan to manage stress when it comes. Burying it further down isn't the solution. Take your training intensity down. Exercise is a stress and too much of it is not a good thing.

Regardless of whether or not this applies to you, always seek the help of a professional that specializes in hormones to ensure you're getting proper care for your health.

Beyond hormones, our metabolism plays a massive role in how we burn calories. As we learned earlier, the metabolism accounts for 60-70% of all the calories you burn in the day.

Having said that, having a faster metabolism is a key element of not only losing fat, but keeping it off as well.

I know what you may be thinking. "Adam, I'm older now. The metabolism I had when I was 18 ain't coming back." And I get that! You're right, you probably won't return to your peak in which you were burning through calories faster than I can type words here on this paper.

But that's okay!

You can still make a significant difference in the rate at which you burn calories.

STRENGTH TRAINING: THE METABOLISM BOOSTER WE ALL NEED

There are many different forms of exercise, but only one has been shown to have beneficial long term effects in increasing metabolic rate in individuals.

That form of exercise is strength training.

Strength training, lifting weights, resistance training, whatever you want to call it, has the ability to increase our body's ability to burn calories at rest.

What is strength training? Strength training is lifting weights with the intent to get stronger and/or build muscle. I like to use the term "strength training" because it implies using resistance difficult enough to call the body to get stronger. Many people confuse strength training with cardio performed with weights in their hands.

Just because you're using weights doesn't mean you are truly strength training. You need to be using the resistance to demand your body to get stronger.

What does this look like in a workout?

First, let's discuss exercise selection. You can select whatever movements you want in your workout, but I encourage you to always have the big five lifts as your staples. The big five are squats, deadlifts, overhead press, bench press, and rows.

You can incorporate accessory movements like bicep curls, leg extensions, etc. as you wish, but be sure to have those staples in your routine.

Those movements are compound movements so they allow the most opportunity to apply resistance/load. The more resistance can be applied, the more the body will respond. For example, squatting 200 pounds will lead to more benefit strength wise compared to doing 100 pounds on the leg extension machine.

Now let's discuss structure. Straight sets are a great way to reap strength benefits. Straight sets means you are performing the movement for the assigned reps, resting, and then completing another set.

For example, three sets of six squats would look like this:

- Six squats
- Rest
- Six squats
- Rest
- Six squats

This brings us to the topic of rest periods. How long should you be resting in between sets? For strength and muscle benefit, anywhere from 60 seconds to 2 minutes is a good range. If you don't have enough rest in between sets, you won't be able to push the heaviest weight you can with good form because you won't be recovered in time.

Now let's talk about intensity. How heavy should you be going? Well, the answer is simple. As heavy as you can with good form, stopping one to two reps short of complete failure. Complete failure means you literally cannot perform another rep. So, let's say you need to do eight reps, completing your set one to two reps short of absolute failure. This means that you need to use a weight that you can lift for eight reps, knowing that you could only do one, maybe two more if your life depended on it. Figuring out the weight you need for this will take time in the gym learning more about your strength and what you're capable of doing.

But what if the reps increase, should you go lighter? Yes, and no. The weight should always be heavy (while keeping good form) relative to the reps that you are doing. So, of course you will be lifting less weight for twelve reps than you would for six. However, you don't want the weight to be light relative to the reps, making it easier than it should be.

Here is an example of how you can structure your program:

Phase 1: 4 weeks

- 4-6 reps
- 3-4 sets
- 2 minutes rest between sets

Phase 2: 4 weeks

- 8-10 reps
- 3-4 sets
- 90 seconds rest between sets

Phase 3: 4 weeks

- 12-15 reps
- 3-4 sets
- 60 seconds rest between sets

If you use these principles as the staples of your training program, you will be sending a signal to your body to improve its metabolism.

But what about cardio? Doesn't that burn the most amount of calories? If burning more calories in the day than you eat is what matters for fat loss, isn't the name of the game burning more calories?

Yes, that is the name of the game, but the long game is what we need to take into consideration.

Sure, cardio burns more calories per session compared to strength training. But chronic cardio can have a negative long term effect that not a lot of people consider.

Our bodies were created to adapt to the environment we put them in. When we perform cardio chronically, our body will adapt by becoming more efficient with burning calories. This means that our body will get better at burning fewer and fewer calories during sessions as well as at rest.

Being able to burn fewer calories at rest would not be advantageous when it comes to calories in vs. calories out.

We also need to consider why cardio burns more calories per session. Cardio simply burns more calories per session because your body is requiring more energy than it would need during a lifting session. This is what is called manual calorie burn.

We have to manually do the work in order to burn the calories. With resistance training, our



body adapts by improving its metabolism, burning calories automatically.

When we lose fat, we are going to need to continue doing what we did in order to lose that fat. If we run for an hour per day to lose the weight, we can't just stop and expect that the weight won't come back on.

This is why strength training must be the staple. The more strength you gain and the more muscle you have, the less manual work you will have to do to burn calories, because your metabolism is already taking care of it.

Does this mean cardio is bad and it should never be done? Absolutely not. Cardio can and should be a part of a well-rounded program for overall health. But when it comes to speeding up your metabolism, it's critical that your cardio signal doesn't outweigh your strength training signal.

Think of it like a sport. If I wanted to become a better pitcher, I would want to practice pitching often. But the cardio benefits from basketball may help my endurance on the mound. If I play tons and tons of basketball, but hardly ever practice my pitching, I'm not going to be the best pitcher.

In regards to training, you should be lifting more often than you are doing cardio work. For example, you could do 3 days of lifting and one day of cardio.

If you want to burn more calories automatically, your program should be centered around strength training.

HOW TO KNOW HOW MANY CALORIES YOU SHOULD BE EATING

This is a question all of us want to know. How many calories should you eat to lose fat? And just like everything else in fitness, it completely depends.

There are too many factors that come to play to give any one person a direct answer.

A lot of people will go to calculators online that will take their age, height, weight and activity level to give them a number of calories to eat in the day for their goal.

This is good and well, but it is nothing more than a guesstimate, and should be treated as such. In order to figure out whether or not you're in a calorie deficit, you'll need to do some work.

Here is how I recommend people get a good idea of whether or not they're in a calorie deficit.

Track your food intake and see how it affects your average weight. Your average weight is the average of five to seven weigh-ins per week. Getting the average will help equalize fluctuations and help give a realistic reading of what your weight really is. If you track your food and the average amount of calories you're eating causes your average weight to creep up after a few weeks, you're likely not in a calorie deficit. If your average weight starts to drop after a few weeks, it's likely you're in a deficit. Adjust your intake based on the changes in your average weight.

I know that it's not as simple as punching your stats in a calculator, which you're more than welcome to do, by the way. But this method will help give you a better idea of what's really going on, while teaching you more about what you're really putting in your mouth throughout the day.

Feel free to start with a calculator that you find online, but use it as a starting point and see how it affects your average weight.

Even after years and years of learning my own body, I still don't and will never know that exact amount of calories I need to lose weight, because it is ever changing. I have a rough idea on where to start, but that's it. You won't ever know the exact amount. The more you experiment, the more you'll learn.

HOW TO AVOID STALLING

One thing that I can't stand is the negative effects that have come from the over glorification of calorie deficits. Most people want to lose fat, so they are led to believe that they constantly need to be in a calorie deficit.

Similar to exercise, the body responds and adapts to the quantity of food that we eat.

If we continue decreasing our intake more and more over time, the body will compensate by slowing down the rate at which it burns calories.

Not only will continuing to decrease your food intake negatively impact your metabolism, it will make your quality of life sucky as well.

Who enjoys life eating 800 calories per day? No one. And yes, there are people out there that eat that little. Don't let it happen to you!

In order to avoid hitting a wall and needing to reduce calories once again, I recommend fluctuating your intake. You can change the amount of calories you eat each day, week, whatever you want. As long as you're in a deficit more often than a maintenance or surplus, you'll lose weight over time.

What I like to do with my clients is spend 2-4 weeks in a deficit, and then 1-3 weeks in a surplus. Fluctuating intake is shown to lead to better results, and it can help keep you from burning out.

THE MAGICAL MACRONUTRIENT

In order to make sure that the weight you are losing is fat and not muscle, you also need to be eating ample protein. Anywhere from .6-1g of protein per pound of bodyweight is a good range. If you are leaner, lean toward the higher end. If you are overweight or obese, you don't need to worry about getting within that range. You can be lower, around .4-.6g protein per pound of bodyweight.

If enough protein isn't present while you're in a calorie deficit, it's possible that your body will resort to breaking down some muscle tissue for energy as well.

So, lift weights, eat ample protein, and be in a deficit more often than not.

And there is your complete guide to fat loss.

Let's go over the key takeaways.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- We lose weight by burning more calories in the day than we are consuming.
- A majority of our calories burned are burned through BMR (basal metabolic rate).
- Strength training promotes a faster metabolism, burning more calories automatically and making long term fat loss easier.
- Cardio can burn more calories per session. It can be used as a great tool to burn calories and improve health, but done too much and the body may not see the metabolism-boosting benefits from strength training.
- Your training program should be centered around strength training while incorporating the five major movements.
- In your training sessions, test your strength and increase weight as often as possible while maintaining good form.
- In order to figure out a calorie deficit, track your food intake and see how that affects your average weight. It will take time but it will be worth it.
- To avoid hitting a plateau or burning out, fluctuate your intake, making sure that you're in a deficit more often than you're in a surplus or maintenance.
- Eat ample protein. .6-1g protein per pound of bodyweight. For those that are overweight or obese, .4-.6g per pound of bodyweight.



ONE LAST NOTE

I don't know where you're at in your journey, and how long you've been trying to lose fat. But I want to leave you with this note before you close out of this guide.

You are not defined by the number you see on the scale. Your health is not entirely determined by the number you see on the scale.

If you've been frustrated for a long time and have an unhealthy relationship with the scale, I invite you to throw it away and start focusing on other elements of your health.

Focus on performance markers like strength. Focus on the consistency of your vegetable intake. Focus on your consistency of your workouts. Focus on improving your squat form, whatever it may be. Take your mind off of the scale, and start focusing on something more beneficial.

The scale doesn't know how much fat you have, how much muscle you have, how much water you're holding on to, or how much sodium you've had.

It's just a number. And that number is a teenie tiny part of the big picture. And that teenie tiny part of the picture is certainly not something to give your worth, identity, and overall health to.

Much love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Adam is a fitness professional, baseball fan, and cookie fanatic based in Fort Collins, Colorado. After hanging up the cleats, he found a strong interest in the human body and how it performs. Since then, Adam has been transforming lives through fitness in a fun and encouraging atmosphere. As an ACE CPT and Fitness Nutrition Specialist, he is constantly moved to help people improve in all walks of life.

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