


7 Rules for Permanent Fat Loss & Increased Muscle Tone

One thing that I notice in all the e-mails that I get is that people are really confused about the way to get rid of their body fat. Many factors contribute to this confusion but the main one, in my opinion, are the infomercials that appear on T.V. as well as articles written in magazines with less than up to date information. In an effort to eliminate this confusion, this week I will share the 7 Rules of Fat Loss that need to be followed in order to achieve maximum permanent fat loss along with increased muscle tone.

Fat Loss Rule #1: Consume less calories than your body burns for five days a week.

You need to consume approximately 500 calories less than what your body burns (maintenance amount) as if you do not create a caloric deficit, no matter what you do, you will not lose fat! However, it is important that over the weekends you increase your calories by 700 over the maintenance amount. 

Fat Loss Rule #2: Be more concerned with the way you look in the mirror (or in pictures) and your waist size rather than with your total body weight in the scale.

Scale measurement does not distinguish between the amount of fat and muscle that you have so do not focus only reaching a particular number. Most of the time, the trainees asking the questions tell me that they need to lose anywhere between 20-40 pounds. However, I would not be nearly as concerned with the weight as I would be with the way you look in the mirror and your waist size. The reason for that is the fact that as you begin your weight training you will start gaining muscle mass. As you gain muscle mass you will put weight on. So what will happen here is that while your scale will tell you that you are still overweight and that your weight is not moving, you are actually making progress as you are losing fat and gaining muscle. Therefore, just concern yourself with the way you look (pictures are a great way to track this) and stop obsessing about your weight.

Fat Loss Rule #3: Concentrate on using weight training exercise, not excessive cardio, for losing fat.

Yes, you heard right. Even though I constantly hear the line "I will lose the fat first by doing cardio and then gain muscle after all of the fat is gone", this is not the best way to lose fat! The reason for this is that by using cardio as your sole source of exercise you will lose equal amount of fat and muscle. The end result will be a smaller fat version of yourself with a lower metabolism (due to the muscle loss). Gaining muscle is really the secret to permanent fat loss as the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn at rest on any given day. In addition, gaining muscle is the key to achieving the firm good looking body that everybody wants but dieting and cardio alone will not give.


Fat Loss Rule #4: If possible, attempt to exercise first thing in the morning on an empty stomach.

I really love exercising first thing in the morning on an empty stomach as I always get the quickest fat loss results that way. The reason for this is that your body's glycogen reserves have been exhausted due to the overnight fast, so the body has to rely on burning fats for fuel. Besides, that way I have the rest of the day to eat, recover, and grow. However, if you do not like to weight train first thing in the morning at least try a quick 15 minute intense aerobic activity (this could be a quick stationary bike ride or a vigorous walk) as well as 5 minutes of abdominal exercise done in superset fashion. That gives you a total short 20 minute aerobic workout that jumps starts your fat burning mechanisms early in the day.

Fat Loss Rule #5: Eat smaller more frequent meals throughout the day.

The first thing that most dieters do is that they start a crash diet where they only eat once or twice a day. Again, this is a sure fire way to lose muscle and lower your metabolism. As we already know, less muscle and a lower metabolism is not the way to get to your goal.

In order to keep the metabolism going at full speed and the blood sugar levels under control in order to keep energy levels high and cravings away, 4 to 6 small balanced meals a day is the way to go. By balanced what I mean is that each meal should contain all of the macronutrients (carbs, protein and fats) in a specific ratio.

While metabolisms differ, I have found that a ratio of 40-45% Carbs, 40-35% Protein, and no more than 20% Fats is generally the best way to go. 

Fat Loss Rule #6: Let water be your main beverage.

Time and time again I have noticed that dieters start their diets with a sincere effort and even count all the calories of the foods that they consume. However, most totally forget about the fact that fruit juices, sodas and other beverages contain calories as well. Therefore, avoid any type of drink that contains calories and concentrate on drinking plain water instead. By doing this you will get the following benefits:

Your appetite will be suppressed as water helps control your appetite. Sometimes when you feel hungry after a good meal this sensation indicates a lack of water. Drinking water at that time would take the craving away. You will get a metabolic boost as cold water increases your metabolism. The fat loss process will be operating a full peak as water is needed in order for fat loss to occur. You will not be drinking unnecessary calories as water has no calories.


Fat Loss Rule #7: Be prepared; Pack your meals in advance. One thing that totally kills dieters is going to work. Work, however, is not the culprit. The culprit is the lunch hour. If the dieter does not pre pack his/her food, lunch comes along and the person ends up going to the nearest fast food joint and exposing themselves to temptation that probably nine out of ten times they succumb to. Therefore, the best way to stay on the diet (and also avoid losing meals) is to pre pack everything in such a way that when a meal time comes, it is relatively easy to have access to the food. Another advantage of this is that since the food is pre packed, you will not be adding extra food to the plate. Bonus Fat Loss Rule: Go to bed early and get adequate rest every night. Two reasons for this: Lack of sleep increases your hormone cortisol, which is a hormone that stores fat and burns muscle (in other words, it does the exact opposite of what you are trying to accomplish), and decreases your testosterone levels (which need to be high in order to keep your fat burning/muscle gaining processes going at full speed). While sleep requirements vary, seven to nine hours of sleep is generally a good rule of thumb. The probability of succumbing to late night cravings increases exponentially for every late hour of the day that you stay awake.

The Fat Loss Rx

Now that we've covered the 7 Rules for Fat Loss, here is my prescription for you to lose fat:

Use weight training as the main exercise form in your training routine. If you are starting out, stick to a full body weight training routine performed three times a week; like Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. You may want to experiment training first thing in the morning on an empty stomach in order to further accelerate fat loss gains. The key is to remain properly hydrated with plenty of water before, during and after the workout. Give it a four week trial and if you just don't feel good (or it is not practical based on your schedule) then just train at any convenient time during the day. If you are able to do the weight training in the morning, then do 40 minutes of weights and only 10 minutes of a light bike ride afterwards in order to flush out the lactic acid in your system.

Use cardio on the days that you do not lift weights first thing in the morning on an empty stomach.

Again, the key thing is to remain well hydrated. 

Also, limit yourself to no more than 40 minutes. If you have been doing cardio for a while now, throw a curve ball at your body in order to keep it guessing and therefore adapting (in this case, in order to keep the aerobic activity burning fat). You can confuse the body by doing 2 weeks of 20 minutes of cardio, then two weeks of 30 minutes and then 2 weeks of 40 minutes. After the last two weeks, repeat the six week cycle. (Note: Keep in mind that in order to burn fat while performing aerobics you need to keep your heart rate at the fat burning range. Many people neglect this and therefore, get no benefit out of aerobic exercise. Your fat burning range is: $[220 - \text{Your Age}] \times 0.75 = \text{Required beats per minute}$. So as long as you keep your heart rate at that level, plus or minus 10 beats per minute, you will be burning fat).

Eat 4 to 6 meals per day (women can get away with 4 meals but guys need 5 or 6). Use a ratio of 40-45%, 40-35%, and no more than 20% fat in every meal.

Get 7 (8 hours being the ideal) to 9 hours of sleep each night. As we already mentioned, lack of sleep increases your hormone cortisol, which is a hormone that stores fat and burns muscle (in other words, it does the exact opposite of what you are trying to accomplish), and decreases your testosterone levels (which need to be high in order to keep your fat burning/muscle gaining processes going at full speed).

Use a good Multiple Vitamin and Mineral Formula along with a protein supplement. The reason for the Multiple Vitamin and Mineral formula is to avoid nutritional deficiencies. The brand I use is the GNC Ultra Mega. I buy them on Super Tuesday (so I save 20% off) plus I get two in order to get the second one at half the price (plus the 20% on top of it). Also, get yourself a good Vitamin C supplement (I take 3 grams in divided dosages of 1 gram a day). Vitamin C is a great cortisol suppressor plus it helps your immune system. Finally, the protein supplement is good as a convenient way to get all of your meals without having to eat real food all day long.

Ensure that you drink plenty of water (bodyweight x 0.66 = ounces that you need to drink every day).

No smoking or drinking alcohol. Both lower testosterone levels (amongst other problems). Alcohol in particular is great for gaining fat.

I hope this thoroughly clears all of the confusion associated with losing fat. I wish I could tell you that there is a magic bullet out there that will make all of the fat disappear but I can tell you that I have really searched for it and the only one available is just plain hard work, smart dieting and your determination to make it happen. Good luck with dieting!