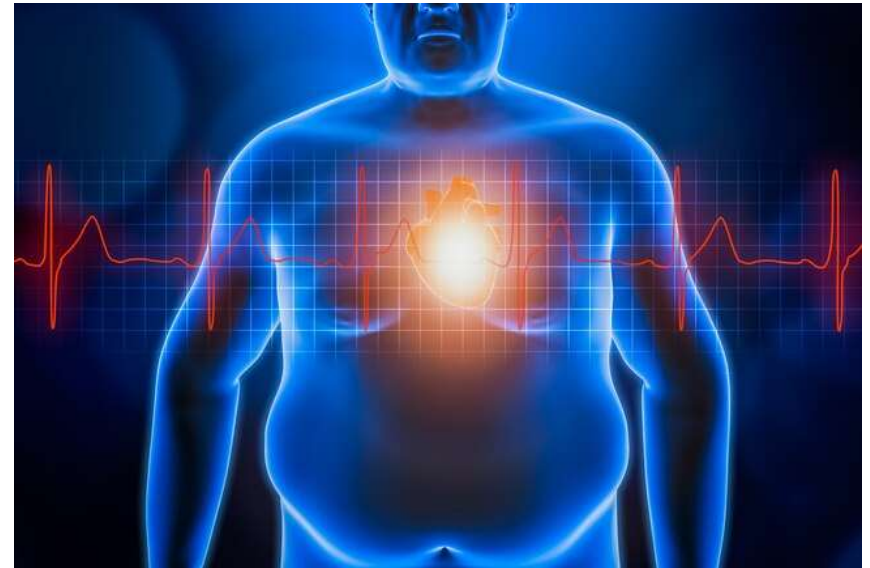


# **Why Belly Fat Forms and How to Lose It**

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# More Around the Middle

- Belly fat is a problem, and not just because of how it looks.
- The type of fat that collects in your belly is called visceral fat.
- It surrounds your organs and raises your risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.
- To find out if you have excess fat in this area, put a tape measure around your midsection at bellybutton-level.
- More than 35 inches in women and 40 inches in men is too much.
- Here are a few reasons why belly fat forms and how to lose it.



# You're Eating Too Much

- If you take in more calories than you burn off, you put on pounds everywhere -- including in your middle.
- You need to cut about 500 calories a day to lose a pound.
- That may sound like a lot, but look at cutting the highest-calorie foods from your diet first.
- Cookies, French fries, soda, and juice pack many calories into a few sips or bites.
- **Replace those first with low-calorie, nutrient-dense foods like broccoli, apples, brown rice, and brothy soups.**



# You've Had a Few More Birthdays

- Age might bring wisdom, but it isn't kind to your midline.
- With each passing year, your muscle mass declines and your metabolism slows, so you don't burn as many calories as you used to.
- That means you can eat the same amount and still see the number on the scale creep up.
- Age-acquired weight tends to collect around the middle.
- To prevent unwanted gains, **cut back on calories or add more muscle-building exercise.**



# Blame Your Genes

- If you eat right and exercise and those stubborn pounds still won't go, your genes could be to blame.
- Another clue is if other family members struggle with their weight.
- Genes control how your body burns calories, how quickly you feel full, and whether you gain weight in your thighs, butt, or belly.
- Even if belly fat runs in your family, you can overcome your genes with the **right diet and enough exercise.**



# You've Started 'The Change'

- In women, the combination of aging and the loss of estrogen at menopause adds up to weight gain.
- Genes, loss of muscle mass, and overeating also contribute to weight creep in your 40s and 50s.
- The extra pounds that might have settled in your hips earlier in life now cluster in your middle, also thanks to hormone changes.
- That weight shift does more than make your pants tighter.
- It can also raise your risk for heart disease.





# You Don't Move Enough

- Americans spend more than 10 hours a day in a seated position.
- Although diet plays a major part in weight gain, lack of movement contributes, too.
- To avoid putting on extra pounds in your belly and elsewhere in your body, get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic exercise **each week.**



# Sleep Is Hard to Come By

- Too little shut-eye could be part of the reason you've gained weight.
- Your body makes hormones that make you feel full.
- Lack of sleep can make them less effective.
- That's why, when you're sleep-deprived, you may overeat and gain weight, especially in your belly.
- When you don't get enough sleep, you may also crave more high-calorie comfort foods.





# You're Stress Eating

- Too much stress isn't good for your mental state or your weight.
- Stress triggers the release of cortisol, a hormone that makes you crave high-fat, carb-heavy foods like pizza, fries, and cookies.
- Cortisol also deposits fat around your belly.
- Another way stress leads to weight gain is by keeping you up at night.
- People who sleep fewer hours tend to have more belly fat.



# You Haven't Kicked the Habit

- Some people who smoke are afraid to quit because they worry that they'll gain weight.
- But even though smokers have a lower body mass index than nonsmokers, their bellies are bigger.
- Smokers gain more visceral fat, the kind that's linked to heart disease and other chronic health conditions, than nonsmokers.
- So, in case you needed another reason to quit, now you've got one.



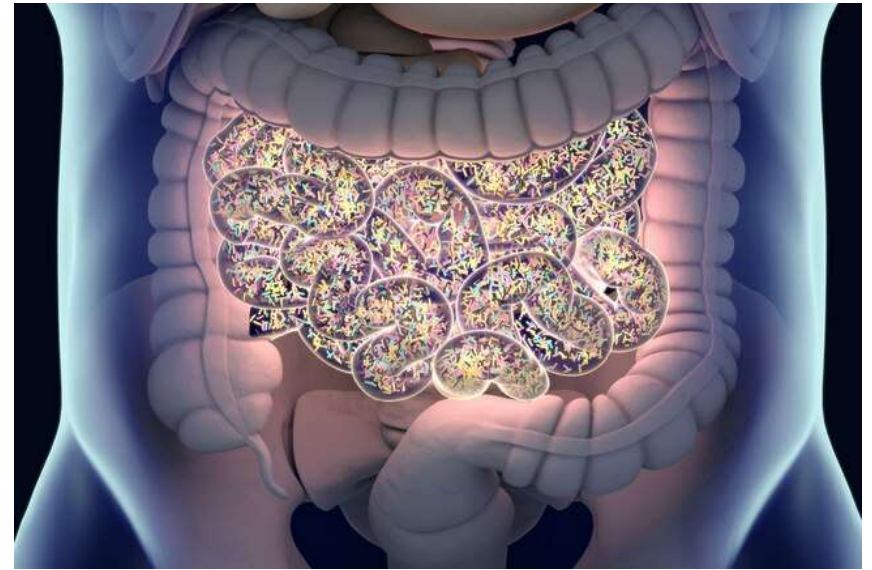
# You Eat Too Many Trans Fats

- These artificial fats raise bad (LDL) cholesterol and boost your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- Foods cooked in trans fats are high in fat and calories and can cause weight gain.
- The FDA has banned added trans fats in foods, but some products made before the ban could still be on store shelves.
- Read food labels. If the ingredients list includes partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, that food contains trans fat. Try to choose a different item.



# Your Gut Bacteria Aren't Helpful

- Your intestines are home to trillions of bacteria.
- Some of these germs live in harmony with you and help your body digest food.
- Others break down food so much that your body absorbs more calories from it and stores more energy in the form of fat.
- There's evidence that probiotics, found in fermented foods like kimchi and yogurt, might get rid of belly fat.
- These friendly bacteria won't replace calorie cutting, but they might help.



# It's Your Medicine

- The answer to your weight gain could be hidden inside your medicine cabinet.
- Certain drugs are notorious for causing weight gain.
- These include some diabetes drugs, some antidepressants, steroids, and epilepsy medicines.
- A few medications add fat directly to the belly area, including beta-blockers, which treat high blood pressure.

