

Module 9 Lesson 3

Transcript

Today we're discussing belly fat in men. Search it, Google it, look around. You'll see almost all of the media coverage and articles about men's weight loss is about belly fat. Yep. Most of the weight loss titles you'll see are going to have belly in it somewhere when those articles are targeting men. Today I want to highlight the differences between weight in men and weight in women. I'm going to cover the science of why men gain in their bellies most, the major health risks involved in storing extra weight in your gut, and how you can help male clients ditch the excess belly fat.

So let's get started. I can think of dozens and dozens of male clients I've had who have come to me in despair about their love handles or beer belly. While the dad bod is the new sexy and a rail thin older man may seem like an anomaly reserved for some of our favorite old time rockers, I want to look into the science of that spare tire and share that all with you. It actually is super different for women. Some of us gain weight in our bellies. Some of us have the curvy hips and thighs. Others of us hoard fat in strange places like our faces and arms.

Men, across the board, seem to carry most of their extra pounds around their belts. Occasionally, you'll find a guy with a big backside, but that's really not the norm. So why is belly fat a thing for our dudes out there? Before we talk about aesthetics, which is probably why people care the most about gaining weight in their stomachs, obviously there are major health risks involved in storing extra weight in your gut. We know belly fat is linked to cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and type two diabetes, colorectal cancer, sleep apnea, premature death from any cause, and high blood pressure.

Make sure to read the handout attached to this lesson to learn about other common diseases and medical issues that the men in our life face. I've said it hundreds of times that I never care why men come to me wanting to lose their weight. All of my clients are beautiful to me. My goal is from a health and wellness standpoint, and we have to minimize the risks I just listed that come from carrying extra weight in the middle.

As we've been discussing, a loss of testosterone contributes to belly fat as does the loss of muscle that comes with age and of course diet and exercise. Also, we used to say that the belly came from beer drinking, right? We've curved that slightly. I mean, all alcohol is going to contribute to storing fat in the belly, but still, what's the deal with why the fat goes central and doesn't distribute all around in men? I have the answers for you.

First of all, belly fat contains high levels of the enzyme aromatase. Aromatase is responsible for converting testosterone into estrogen, the female sex hormone. So obese men have higher estrogen levels than normal weight men, and we know that estrogen is stored in fat cells. Second, high aromatase and estrogen activity slows down the production of gonadotropin releasing hormone, GRH. The GRH leads to lower levels of luteinizing hormone, which decreases the production of testosterone. The bottom line, excessive belly fat appears to suppress testosterone levels.

I know, I know, you're thinking, but what do we do to get rid of this belly fat? How do we help our clients? It is really helpful to note that when you start to lose weight, the belly is generally the first place the fat will leave. That's a good thing. Even if your client is resistant to making many changes, start by having him reduce his portion size, for example. That's one small thing, and it sounds obvious, I know, but working on the HQ is of utmost importance. Decreasing the less healthful foods and adding a lot more of the healthy things you want him to eat in is a solid starting point. Just by adding in more of the good stuff your male clients may push out some of the bad stuff, and those small changes may get the client to notice a little bit of a difference, and that is very, very motivating.

Push the physical activity. Any extra metabolic activity and muscle use and building will contribute to the weight loss. Remember, consistency is key here as well. Use all of the pillars, speaking to your client's motivation specifically. Sometimes you don't have to go into detail about health if the client is only aesthetically motivated, and that's totally okay, you want your client to make the changes on his own terms.

Set reasonable goals. The ideal is for the waist to hip ratio to be below one-to-one or as close as possible. There are online calculators you can use with detailed analyses to help you determine risk, and I really do find that I like to break out the tape measure and reevaluate every year.

Okay, let's recap the main points from this lesson. Belly fat is linked to cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, and type two diabetes, colorectal cancer, sleep apnea, premature death from any cause, and high blood pressure. Clients need to understand this as a form of motivation. Belly fat contains aromatase, which converts testosterone into estrogen. This slows down the production of GRH, leading to lower levels of luteinizing hormone, which decreases the production of testosterone, resulting in suppressed testosterone levels. Fat is stored in the gut, first in the belly, called subcutaneous fat, and then around abdominal organs called visceral fat. Visceral fat is damaging to health and to help male clients lose this belly fat, reduce portion sizes, push physical activity, focus on all the pillars of a nutritious life, and set reasonable goals.

I'll see you in the next lesson.