

(EAS)

Weight a Minute!

Start off next year losing fat...but according to your body fat percentage, not an out-of-touch height and weight chart

We've all heard the statistics: more than a quarter of our children are obese, more than half the US is overweight, more than a fifth of all people have just gone on or off a food program. A lot of numbers, but very few answers. Now we hate to tell you that size doesn't matter, but maybe it's feel you should be more concerned with. It's a fact that muscle weighs more than fat, so if you're hard as a rock how can you expect the scales to read soft as a feather? Conversely, if you weigh less, does that mean you're in better shape or just devoid of any muscle mass? Regardless of whether your body is God-like or has a lot of "give," it's time to give the body fat percentage approach a try rather than weighting around for results.

Every Body's Different

Phil Goglia, like a lot of Americans, was overweight and under-whelmed by the accepted diet plans for changing his body. "A 6-foot-tall male should weigh between 160-172 pounds based on Metropolitan weight charts," he says. "That was never me — and was never going to be." What Goglia realized a long time ago was that his body type was different from the average. Just as some bodies have the ability to be rail skinny, others naturally are "big-boned." But "big-boned" and "fat-boned" are two different things. Rather than lock in to a weight, Goglia always challenged himself to focus on the body he wanted. He saw a Phil with more muscularity and less body fat, in essence, a better looking Phil, not necessarily a Phil that weighed tons less. Today Goglia is co-owner of Santa Monica, Calif.-based training center Fitness Concepts and can boast winning the bodybuilding title Mr. North America — but at one point he was just trying to be Mr. Healthier. And that's the key, Goglia says, reasonable goals. "We put unfair expectations on ourselves," he says, "and that immediately puts our fitness goals in jeopardy. You can't go from 25 percent body fat to 8 percent so easily, but 25 percent to 15 percent might not be so impossible."

Notice he said "body fat," not weight. So maybe the best place to start is not on a scale, but with a body fat counter. Remember that pinching device your gym teacher used on the back of your arm? Buy one and get pinching. If the number you end up with depresses you and you're considering cutting out food all together, you'll never succeed in your goal. "People think it's about the reduction of calories," Goglia says, "but if you cut out proper protein in the process you'll lose what it takes for proper muscle repair from workouts. The only protein that does this best are 'face foods' like fish and turkey, along with egg whites." What really needs to be taken off the plate for body fat reduction, however, are carbohydrates. While carbs should be eaten early in the day, by mid-afternoon they should be reduced just to vegetables. This doesn't include non-single carbs such as bread, muffins and multi-cereals, Goglia says, because they shouldn't be

consumed at all. "These foods may taste the best," he says, "but they also are the worst sources of nutrition."

Of course, it's not enough just to tell you what to eat and what not to. It's important to have your day planned out thoroughly in terms of ingestion. Remember, don't use words like "diet" anymore, but rather "lifestyle." Here's Goglia's example of a day in the lifestyle of someone who weighs 200 pounds at 25% body fat and wants to reduce to 15%:

Provided you have no cholesterol issues you can begin the day with oatmeal or shredded wheat, a fruit and three egg whites. A mid-morning snack would be another fruit and a tablespoon of natural peanut butter — If allergic to peanuts then almond butter or 12 raw almonds is a good substitute. Obviously a lot of people don't have time for lunch, but Goglia says you better make time. "This meal is the bridge to the rest of your day," he says. The best way not to burn this bridge is with a meat like chicken breast, yams and rounding off the meal with a salad. In between printing out those mid-afternoon spreadsheets for the boss, snack on an energy source like another fruit, or celery with peanut butter. For those who can't wait till dinner, Goglia says a little pop tab of low fat tuna won't hurt and may even be that extra fuel for evening workout people. Dinner is usually the meal where people cop out, but be your own nutrition cop and keep it lean. A meal like grilled fish, steamed vegetables and a salad, along with a fruit snack after dinner should be enough to finish off your day...and with no guilt.

Of course, some people aren't crazy about so much solid food, so Goglia says supplements are the best way to stay sane. In the morning you can trade in your oatmeal for a high protein, low-carb shake with two scoops of whey protein, fruit, a tablespoon of peanut butter, water and your favorite blender. A similar shake could be used in place of dinner every other night if so desired. A change in diet alone will make that body fat percentage drop, however...

Exercise the Demons

Okay, now you're eating right, but without proper exercise this lifestyle change is only halfway implemented. Goglia urges cardio to stimulate fat as an energy source. Remember, fat takes up four times the space of muscle per pound, so by burning it up you may weigh the same but you won't look the same...and that's the whole point. "An hour on the treadmill or bike four days a week can really make a difference, but being consistent at it is vital," Goglia says. "If you burn out after a month then all the gains you have will be lost quickly. If you find yourself needing to do three days a week at first then do it. Three days a week for a year is worth a hell of a lot more than four days a week for a month."

Of course, you should also hit the weights, making sure to break out your workout sessions into bodyparts — covering *all* bodyparts. "A lot of people make the mistake of only hitting the 'glory' muscles such as biceps or chest," Goglia says. "Your calves, hams and triceps are just as important. When you say you want a better body, it has to be the

whole body. We want to replace that fat with muscle, so why leave some areas weak for no reason?"

Which Store Sells Discipline Again?

Though all of the above is great in theory, you can't live life in a test tube. And, unfortunately, you can live it at a fast food restaurant. Goglia, who's also author of the nutrition book Turn Up the Heat, says once a week of the fast lane won't kill you and reminds that you don't necessarily have to go Big Mac. "Most of these junk places have salads and there's no rule that says you can't grab one," he says. But what if the burger temptation is just too great? "No matter what," Goglia commands, "don't punish yourself. Many people were broken, not by the first french fry, but the thousands that followed. People have a tendency to be all or nothing with their eating habits. You're going to screw up once in a while. Learn to let it go."

But it's not just greasy burgers that are your enemy, but time itself. Between job and family, it sometimes leaves little left over to think of your body. Goglia says your body must be treated like your job, because it's your job to be around a long time for the people in your life. "Get out the Palm Pilot and schedule in nutritious snacks and keep track of your progress just like you would a board meeting," he says. "Say to yourself come hell or high water I'm going to make time to lower my body fat because it's important to me. One thing you'll find is by providing yourself with more energy from improved health you'll be doing everything else better as well. Shh, that part's a secret."

Sidebar

The American Council on Exercise gives the following classifications and correlating body-fat percentages for each gender:

Essential fat

Women: 10-12%

Men: 2-4%

Athletes

Women: 14-20%

Men: 6-13%

Fitness

Women: 21-24%

Men: 14-17%

Acceptable

Women: 25-31%

Men: 18-25%

Obese

Women: 32%+
Men: 26%+