

THE
BELLY
OFF!

WORKOUTS

**A 6-WEEK DETOX DIET AND FITNESS PLAN
THAT STRIPS AWAY FAT—FAST!**
JEFF CSATARI and DAVID JACK WITH THE EDITORS OF *Men'sHealth*

TO THE BELLY OFF! CLUB MEMBERS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We at *Men's Health* firmly believe that it's never too late to get back in shape. With the right plan and a little gumption, you can change your body and improve your health—dramatically. This book will help you to succeed not only because it's a proven program but also because it was created by a team of smart and talented people—folks who've got your back. I thank them all and recognize some of them here.

David Jack for his infectious enthusiasm for fitness and skill in developing great workouts, and Belly Off! nutrition expert Chris Mohr, RD, PhD, of MohrResults.com, for his diet and weight-loss wisdom.

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My best friend, Kathy, and our daughters, Katelyn, Lydia, and Sophia. And to my Csatari cousin for loaning me that homemade wooden bench and those cement barbells when I was 10.

—Jeff Csata

I believe it's becoming rare in life to find a career that you enjoy, can use to help others, and in turn experience great fulfillment. I have been blessed to find a path that allows me to do just that.

So many people have shaped me personally and professionally. I am sincerely grateful to them and would like to offer special thanks to:

My mom, Donna, and dad, Duff (RIP), for providing me the structure and the freedom to pursue my dreams; to my wife, Wendy, for her unconditional support and love (I am so proud of you); to my mom and dad, Sharon and Rene, for theirs; and to my beautiful daughters, Ava and Ella, who make me better and fill me with love everyday.

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Finally to the Lord for His provision and grace in my life, for making human beings the greatest miracles in the world, and for choosing and equipping me to work with them.

—David Ja

INTRODUCTION

A lot of guys want six-pack abs. A lot of guys also want baby back ribs. (Extra barbecue sauce please.) The problem is, one kind of six-pack never leads to the other. You know what I mean? It's not so easy to have the abs if you make a habit of beer and ribs. That's reality, friend. Need a napkin?

When you see a shirtless actor on the big screen sporting washboard abs, you can bet he hasn't been sucking down longnecks, pork barbecue, and hush puppies. How about the actress in the skimpy two-piece bouncing in the surf for the paparazzi? She probably spent the morning strapped into a Pilates reformer. Check out her ... *obliques!*

Despite what many of the diet books may promise, losing weight takes a bit of effort and acceptance of those scary concepts known as *discipline* and *sacrifice*. If there's a magic bullet for shedding belly fat—and there really isn't any magic to it—it's accepting the fact that you have to make some changes in your life if you're going to change your body. A turnaround results from doing something different. Success starts by identifying what that change needs to be.

The Belly Off! Club is filled with hundreds of thousands of people who did just that over the past 12 years. Driven by a “wake-up call” in their lives or inspired by others' success, they all did the same thing—they put their finger on exactly what was holding them back from living the life they really wanted. And then they set out to do something about it.

The change didn't come overnight, and they will be the first to tell you that. It happened gradually in baby steps, and often with setbacks—those doses of reality that anyone embarking on a challenge should expect. But it always happened with conviction.

“I knew I had to get back in shape,” recalls Jeff Atwater, a Belly Off! Club member from Massachusetts. “But it wasn't until I recognized how good I felt about myself after losing weight and how amazing my physical self felt after every workout that I became convinced that this was the new me. Exercise is now a part of who I am.”

“Exercise is now a part of who I am.”

—Jeff Atwater, The Belly Off! Club, 2012

If you've read *The Belly Off! Diet* or joined our online club, you may know the story of Belly Off! For those who are new to the club, here's a brief time line of how Belly Off! came to be. Like a lot of ideas here at magazine and book publisher Rodale Inc., it grew, well, organically ...

A bunch of *Men's Health* magazine editors had just finished their regular Wednesday noontime basketball game. Shirts versus skins. And one sweaty editor said, “Ya know, we doughboys don't look anything like the buff dudes on the cover of our magazine.”

The lightbulbs came on—instant story idea: We'll hire a trainer and a nutritionist to put us on a 6-week program to turn our bodies around and, we hope, help us find our abs. The story about our journey ran in the October 2000 issue. In it, you'll read that some of us did see our abs emerge, but a lot of us improved our health and discovered muscles we didn't know we had. In that same article, we invited readers to join the Belly Off! Club at menshealth.com and transform their bodies, too. And they did. In droves. That was more than 12 years ago. Since then, we've featured a Belly Off! success story in almost every issue of the magazine, and you'll find many more online. All told, well over 300,000 people have used these Belly Off! stories as inspiration to lose more than 2 million pounds.

and, more important, dramatically improve their health.

~~And they continue to do so. We encourage you to join the Belly Off! Club~~ [menshealth.com/bellyoff](https://www.menshealth.com/bellyoff) along with following the advice in this book. Start a member profile and use the advice, tips, and member forums to spur your own journey toward a leaner, stronger, healthier body.

ANOTHER WAKE-UP CALL

I dropped 14 pounds in 3 weeks while testing and developing the Belly Off! Diet and fitness program for the first book back in 2009. Since then, I've kept off most of that weight, having learned and followed the most useful (for me) Belly Off! lesson of all: Stop drinking soda and juice. Make your calories count. Those empty liquid ones aren't worth it.

Working for a publisher of healthy living books and magazines comes with some nice lifestyle perks: We have an excellent company gym right down the street from the office, and it's filled with all the latest fitness gear and offers terrific classes. The cafeteria serves up healthy entrées (many of them taken right out of the weight-loss cookbooks we publish), amazing salads and soups, and lots of organic options. On Friday afternoons, organic farmers sell produce, eggs, cheese, free-range beef, and wild salmon in the company dining hall. If I go for a sweaty afternoon run on the wooded trail right outside our building, my colleagues are grateful that there are employee shower facilities available for me afterward. Plus, I have access to the largest health library and medical journal database on the East Coast (it's just one flight up—always take the stairs!), so I can keep up on the latest health and fitness research. I figure I'm healthier than a lot of guys my age, thanks to spending more than 8 hours a day in a place where you're never far from reminders to eat right and exercise.

All of that sounds great, right? Almost *too* perfect, right?

Right.

Last month, I had a blood test, and the results freaked me out. I'm just about one sugar cookie away from a prediabetes diagnosis. In researching an article I was writing about advanced medical tests for *Men's Health*, I filled a vial with my best red for a test called hemoglobin A1C (or HbA1c for short). Unlike the fasting glucose test most family docs routinely use (a test that is fairly inaccurate, for the record), this test measures your average blood sugar over 3 months, giving you a far better picture of how well your body is processing sugar over an extended period of time. The doctor described it like so: Glucose molecules adhere to your red blood cells like sugar to a doughnut. The more sugar, the worse it gets. I guess I had quite a few of these *hemo-goblins*, because my numbers were pretty scary. Over time, the glucose causes damage to your heart, brain, kidneys, eyes, and nerves.

Prediabetes? My family doctor didn't seem that concerned because my HbA1c score was right on the borderline. But it genuinely scared me. I know that prediabetes is just a step away from full-blown diabetes, and most people with "pre" eventually get to "D." I remember what Florence Comite, MD, an endocrinologist I interviewed some time ago told me about HbA1c: "It's one of the best tests for longevity."

And I just failed it.

Diabetes is a horrifying disease, which often leads those who cannot manage it properly down a scary slope toward heart disease, stroke, blindness, amputation, cancer, and premature death. It's arguably the single biggest health epidemic of our time. Experts estimate that by 2020 it will affect one in two Americans. Here's another stat that may make you reconsider that croissant: Gaining 10 pounds triples your likelihood of developing diabetes. And another: Most prediabetics, upward of 30 million in the United States, like me, don't know they have it.

That's what really blew my mind: I didn't have a clue. Here I am, thinking I'm doing all right for a middle-age guy. I'm exercising at least four times a week. I still fit into my size 34 jeans. If I didn't have this blood test, I wouldn't know I'm on the verge of prediabetes (aka metabolic syndrome). I think everything was hunky-dory. Thank goodness I had that blood test. Now I know what I have to deal with—sugar-coated hemoglobin. It's my *new* wake-up call. And I'm going to answer it with renewed effort to clean up my diet of pasta, rice, bread, and baked goods and tackle the *new* metabolic workouts my friend and colleague David Jack has designed for us—workouts contained right here in this book. Fortunately, prediabetes is pretty simple to make go away. Even full-blown type 2 diabetes can be reversed, sometimes without drugs, through diligent dietary changes, exercise, and weight loss.

Where do you stand? Think you're doing all right? Even if your waistline isn't bulging over your belt, I encourage you to ask your doctor about an HbA1c blood test to check your blood sugar. If your belly is big, make an appointment with your doctor today and demand this test. Diabetes is a poisonous snake at your feet that you can't see or hear; you don't even know it's there—until it strikes.

Your next step? Turn the page and make a pact with yourself to follow the Belly Off! Code of Conduct, the six simple principles that will have a dramatic impact on your belly size and your overall health. These principles are supported by the meat of this book:

- The new Belly Off! 2-Minute Drill, a morning ritual that will kick your metabolism into high gear.
- The Belly Off! 6-Week Detox, a 12-point nutrition plan that will whisk “the white stuff” from your diet, burn fat, and fuel your body for the workout program.
- The Belly Off! Walking Program with a 14-Day Kick Start, which quickly constructs a foundation of fitness to build upon.
- New Belly Off! Recipes, which will help you make meals to resuscitate your taste buds when you're tired of chicken breast.
- The Belly Off! Back-in-Shape Workouts, innovative metabolism-boosting, strength-building exercise routines designed to help you shed dangerous belly fat fast, featuring a special workout custom-made for beginners.
- Advanced workouts, including progressive programs that help you achieve the body you've always wanted.

Finally, this book is chock-full of tips, advice, and inspiration from Belly Off! Club members who've made the lifestyle changes and reaped the healthy rewards that you can earn, too, with the right plan, with the Belly Off! Workouts.

—Jeff Csata

P.S. It starts with a commitment.

On the next page, you will find the Belly Off! Club Code of Conduct. Read it. Sign it. Date it. Follow it. Making a promise to yourself is the secret serum that will melt your Belly Off!



THE BELLY OFF! CLUB CODE OF CONDUCT

I PROMISE TO...

■ **Eat breakfast every day.**

It will be rich in protein and include some fats and slow-burning carbohydrates.

■ **Exercise daily.**

Do the Belly Off! 2-Minute Drill every morning, follow the walking program, and perform a Belly Off! strength workout three times per week.

■ **Eliminate sweet beverages.**

That includes fruit juices, sodas, teas with added sugar, and flavored coffee.

■ **Enjoy four to six small meals a day.**

Try to include some protein and fiber each time. Refueling this way will raise your metabolism, keep blood sugar levels stable and prevent overeating.

■ **Cut out processed carbohydrates.**

Remove cakes, cookies, chips, crackers, white bread, pasta, white rice, ice cream, and candy from your diet. Replace them with fresh vegetables and fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, lean protein, and satiating fats.

■ **Avoid alcohol for 6 weeks.**

No beer, wine, or cocktails. This is the easiest way to cut calories and burn fat fast.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

PART

1

THE WARMUP

If you are a beginner, [Part 1](#) The Warmup is custom-made for you. This kickoff to the Back-in-Shape Workouts includes lifestyle, diet, and fitness boosters to get you going, a walking interval program, including an easy, start-from-scratch 14-day walking plan, and an introduction to new Belly Off! 2-Minute Drills of low-impact bodyweight exercises. Simply by moving your body more every day, you will burn calories, increase your flexibility, and lay a foundation for fitness. The program has built-in progressions that push you a little bit more each time you work out. That way you gradually build strength and cardiovascular endurance. The regimen is ideal for those who are significantly overweight or even obese. We've teamed it with a 6-week detox plan, detailed in [Part 2](#) that will clean up your diet and provide the nutrition needed to support your workouts. Good nutrition fuels your exercise. Regular exercise maximizes good nutrition. Both work together to speed weight loss. If you're not significantly overweight and are simply looking to get back in shape, [Part 1](#) is still a great place for you to start.



YOUR BELLY OFF! BOOSTERS

5 Steps to Start Changing Your Life Today!

Welcome to *The Belly Off! Workouts*, where the fat meets the fire. Inside this book you will find extremely effective exercise routines and nutrition advice that will help you to look, feel, and live better than ever. Begin your journey right here, right now with these life-altering boosters.

The goal of the *Belly Off! Workouts* is to start chipping away at your midsection. We really do want to take your belly off! It's not just an issue of appearance and comfort—sporting a big belly has real implications for your health. It is a medical fact that the bigger your middle, the higher your risk of disease.

Belly fat is called visceral fat because it collects deep underneath your abdominal muscle layers around your internal organs. It's fat that doesn't jiggle, but presses out your middle, giving you the apple-shaped body. A waist circumference over 40 inches for men and 35 for women is a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes. In fact, most endocrinologists can guess with 90 percent accuracy whether or not you have prediabetes by simply looking at the size of your belly. That's how easy it is to spot this kind of dangerous fat. Visceral fat interferes with insulin production and blood sugar regulation and it secretes chemicals that trigger inflammation that contributes to type 2 diabetes.

A large midsection is also implicated in high blood pressure, depression, sexual dysfunction, cancer, and—of course—heart disease. A study at the University of Alabama-Birmingham looked at several different factors that determine a person's heart disease risk. The researchers found that the biggest single predictor of a heart attack in a person's future is the amount of visceral fat in his or her abdomen.

We understand that you may be eager to look great in a bathing suit or new work clothes, and *Belly Off!* will get you there—but our first priority is to improve your health. Conveniently, shedding your belly using the strategies in this book will help you achieve both goals at the same time.

During the next 6 weeks, even if you're an absolute beginner, you will construct a solid base of fitness and begin to significantly transform the look and shape of your body. You'll have more energy. You'll be happier. Your friends and family will look up to you as someone who has taken charge of his life, someone who is active, healthy, and in control. If you have any doubt that you have what it takes to succeed on this program, remember this: A strong work ethic is the great equalizer. If you work consistently and follow the advice in this book, don't worry—you *will* achieve your goal.

reducing your belly size and improving your health. We've made it very easy to start: Just use the boosters discussed below and remember to make a pact with yourself using [the Belly Off! Club Code of Conduct](#). Having a plan and working toward a goal has been the secret sauce for success for hundreds of thousands of Belly Off! Club members, and it will work for you.

Now, before you lace up your running shoes, we want you to grab a pen for the first step in your five-point jump start.

FITNESS

What Kind of Exercise Results in the Most Weight Loss?

Here are the top five answers of the Belly Off! Club online:

1. The kind you will do every day.
 2. Any fast-paced workout.
 3. The exercise that you find most enjoyable to stick with.
 4. Interval training.
 5. Circuit-style weight lifting with exercises that work the most muscles.
-

BOOSTER #1: START A FOOD DIARY

On [this page](#), you'll find a food diary that we recommend you fill out at the start of your get-back-in-shape program. The reason? To help convince you that your diet needs to change at the same time that your activity level does. Exercise alone won't cut it. No Belly Off! Club member lost 15 pounds more without altering his food intake—the biggest modifiable factor in your effort to gain fitness. We want you to be conscious of what you are putting in your mouth so you'll have a clear picture of what needs to change. There is no better way of doing that than by keeping a food diary for at least 3 days. Make copies of the [sample log](#). Here are a few helpful tips to keep in mind while filling it in.

- **Choose 3 consecutive days to keep track of your food intake, and make sure at least 1 of those days falls on a weekend.** Why? Because Saturday and Sunday are the days when people eat the most food. A study at Washington University School of Medicine found that the average American consumes 236 more calories on a weekend day than on a weekday. That can add up to a 9-pound weight gain over the course of a year. It's beneficial to know how much more you're eating on your days off and how that figure changes depending on how you spend your weekend.
- **Eat normally.** Don't try to be "good." You want to paint an accurate picture of your regular diet. Jot down what and roughly how much you've eaten after every main meal. At the same time, include any snacks that you've eaten between meals. (Recording your food intake just three times a day instead of after every morsel you consume simply makes the food diary task less of a hassle and easier to keep up with.)
- **Be sure to track your beverages, too; they're a significant source of empty calories.** Tally the number of glasses of water you drink in a day, as well. You will likely be surprised by how little water you actually consume.
- **At the end of each day, figure out a rough calorie count for each meal.** (Use a calorie counting book or an online source to quickly guesstimate the calories in each meal.) Tally and record your total daily calories.

After the third day, review your log. How many calories did you consume? From which types of foods did the bulk of your calories come? How much of what you ate was lean protein and fruits and

vegetables? How much was processed foods? How many foods are included in the [list of “Foods with the Most Nutrition Per Calorie”](#) versus “Foods with the Least Nutrition Per Calorie”? We guarantee this little exercise will be an eye-opener and will point out exactly what in your diet needs to change. You may find that it’s so helpful that you’ll want to continue keeping track of your meals.

NUTRITION

Start with a Shake

Drinking a protein shake before and during a weight-training session may speed weight loss and help build lean muscle, according to researchers at Syracuse University. They found that people who drank a combination of amino acids and carbohydrates had higher metabolic rates the next day compared with when they ate only carbs. People in the test reaped this benefit after drinking a shake containing 22 grams of protein mixed with 35 grams of carbohydrates.

IT WORKS FOR ME

“To overcome tough phases in a weight-loss program, it helps to develop a mantra. Here’s mine: ‘In your life up until this point, you have been one person. It is time to show the world who you can be.’”

—Andy Hayes

Weight Before: 300 pounds

Weight After: 190 pounds

The Belly Off! Club, April 2011

BOOSTER #2: START CLEANING UP YOUR DIET

Unless it happens to be a real blueberry, stay away from blue food. Blue #2 is an artificial dye used along or mixed with other dyes to color many, many processed foods. Studies involving mice that were fed rodent-appropriate doses of Blue #2 in their food suggest that the chemical can trigger the growth of tumors in the brain and elsewhere. Where do you find Blue #2? In the most heavily processed foods—cereals, candy, cake frosting, etc. But don’t go hunting for it on product labels, just start reducing your consumption of food that comes in a box, bag, or can. Keep it simple. Eat fresh.

The next easiest way to clean up your diet is to cut back on drinking soda, juice, or sugary fruit drinks. Your body can’t monitor liquid calories well, so it’s very easy to consume ridiculous quantities of sugar water and calories without even recognizing the load you are placing on your system. And don’t think that diet soda is your savior. A University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study found that when people swapped their favorite sugary soft drink for the diet variety, they made up for the sacrifice by eating more desserts and more bread than people who drank water. It seems that artificial sweeteners increase your hunger for sweet things, the researchers say.

The solution? Water. Drink lots of it. If you are a big juice and soda drinker, this change alone will have a significant impact on your weight very quickly.

Another easy way to simplify your diet: Don’t add sugar or salt to your foods. You don’t need them. Hide the saltshaker and sugar bowl, if you must. Begin cutting back with tomorrow morning coffee. If you normally use two teaspoons of sugar, use one. If you use one, use a half. Gradually wean yourself off the white stuff. Tip: When making your coffee, sprinkle a pinch of cinnamon into the grounds before you start to brew. You know that caffeine raises your resting metabolic rate. What you may not know is that cinnamon will help to regulate your blood sugar levels, helping to keep fat off your belly.



FOODS WITH THE MOST NUTRITION PER CALORIE

- Eggs
- Salmon
- Mozzarella cheese
- Almonds
- Turkey
- Avocados
- Cantaloupe
- Tomatoes
- Spinach
- Blueberries

FOODS WITH THE LEAST NUTRITION PER CALORIE

- Sugar
- Pasta
- Candy
- White rice
- Doughnuts
- Soda
- White bread
- Potato chips

BOOSTER #3: START EATING MORE PROTEIN AND FIBER

In [Part 3](#) of this book, you'll learn just how much protein and fiber you should try to swallow every day for optimum Belly Off! success. But for now, just start making an effort to eat some protein- and fiber-rich food at every meal. Both of these nutrients will fill you up and keep you satisfied longer than carbohydrates will. By eating more, you'll automatically reduce the amount of fast-burning carbs you consume.

NUTRITION

Backward Omelets

The protein in whole eggs helps you feel fuller for longer, says Belly Off! nutritionist Christopher Mohr, PhD, RD, of the weight-loss firm mohr results. But next time, flip the omelet's vegetable-to-egg ratio: Melt a little butter in a pan over medium-high heat. Add lots of fresh chopped vegetables. Sauté. Add two beaten eggs. Scramble, cook through, and serve.

Here's a no-brainer way to ensure that you use this Belly Off! booster daily:

Fill half of your breakfast or dinner plate with protein (eggs, beef, chicken, fish, turkey) and half with vegetables or fruit (especially high-fiber varieties). For fruit, focus on raspberries, blackberries, apples, and pears (with skin), which are among the highest in fiber.

If you find it difficult to get enough fiber, consider using a fiber supplement like Metamucil, psyllium fiber powder that you mix in water or juice. Start with a small amount and increase the dosage gradually. Down a glass before a meal and you'll likely end up feeling full faster.

Another effective dietary supplement to try is PGX granules, made from glucomannan, which has a very high viscosity level. Research has shown that glucomannan can lower your insulin response after a meal by 50 percent, while also lowering bad cholesterol by 20 percent and blood sugar by 20 percent. Mix a scoop into yogurt, juice, or water. In the gut, it expands into a gelatinous mass, making you feel full very quickly. The glucomannan fiber also slows digestion. Taken before a meal, it will lower the glycemic index of any food you eat—so it's a good "appetizer" if you're having pasta. Studies suggest that glucomannan supplementation can cause weight loss even in people who don't restrict calories. In one study, obese adults who took 1 gram of glucomannan fiber an hour before every meal for 8 weeks lost an average of 5.5 pounds without making any other changes to their diet or exercise programs. An earlier study by researchers at the University of Connecticut compared two groups of overweight men and women who were given glucomannan to take 5 minutes before the two largest meals each day. Both groups were put on the same diet, but only one group was asked to do regular exercise. The study found that the exercisers and nonexercisers alike lost the same amount of weight after 8 weeks, suggesting the potential of this fiber to aid weight loss even without exercise. The American Dietetic Association recommends getting 30 grams of fiber a day. Surveys indicate that the average American consumes less than half that amount.

WEIGHT LOSS

Hide Tempting Foods

Having lots of enticing foods in front of your eyes and within reach of your hands will destroy your willpower and derail your weight-loss efforts. You know this. So why is there a bowl of chocolates on your kitchen counter? Or a tin of sugar cookies in your pantry? Have you ever been able to walk past an open bag of potato chips without dipping your hand inside? Remember this about salty and sweet snacks: Out of sight, out of mind, out of belly.

BOOSTER #4: START ELIMINATING FAST FOOD

This week, eat fewer meals at fast-food restaurants than you did last week. You'll save hundreds of calories simply by eating a few more meals at home. If a daily fast-food run is your habit, cut out two drive-thru visits. If you go three times a week, eliminate one of these stops. Start getting into the habit of preparing breakfast and dinner at home and taking snacks like almonds, apples, cheese sticks, and yogurt to work.

When you do eat at restaurants, take greater control of what you consume. Here are some simple ways to start.

- **When ordering a salad, nix the croutons.** Ask for dressing on the side so you—not a heavy-handed line cook—can determine how much you need.
- **Send back the bread basket.** Or take one piece and send back the rest so you won't be tempted.
- **Order unsweetened iced tea or water with lemon.** You'll eliminate about 200 calories instantly by avoiding soda!
- **Make it an omelet.** If you are going to have a restaurant meal, make it breakfast (or have breakfast for dinner).

EXERCISE

How to Burn Off 5,400 Calories Watching TV

Researchers at the University of Tennessee say you can burn almost 150 calories by walking in place during the commercials of a 1-hour TV show (roughly 25 minutes of ads). Since Americans watch an average of 36 hours of TV per week, that can add up to 5,400 calories.

BOOSTER #5: START MOVING MORE

You don't *have* to be sweating underneath a barbell to burn calories. When you think about it, the time you spend exercising—even if you do it for a full hour—counts for just a fraction of your activity during your waking day. The real trick to burning more calories is to bump up your natural movement throughout the day.

If you sit for a living—that is, at a desk in front of a computer, like a lot of people do—that can be challenging. But it's not an insurmountable problem. In fact, it doesn't take much effort to make a difference. A recent study in the journal *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* showed that it takes just 30 total daily minutes of “incidental moderate physical activity” (that would be taking the stairs instead of the elevator) to improve long-term health and fitness. Here are some basic movement more habits that we know you've heard before but could probably benefit from hearing again.

- Get a stand-up desk. You will burn 60 more calories per hour of standing at your computer than you do when sitting in front of it.
- When you need to use the restroom, hoof it to the farthest facility in your workplace to force yourself to walk more.
- Schedule noontime walking meetings with staff.
- Stand whenever you talk on the phone.
- Tap your foot. Studies show that people who fidget tend to be thinner.

- Set your smart phone to remind you to take a rejuvenating walking break every hour.
- Three times a day, walk up three flights of stairs.

IT WORKS FOR ME

“Treats like (home-cooked) chicken burritos stuffed with black beans and guac have replaced drive-thru meals, and they satisfy my cravings.”

—Chris Denman

Weight Before: 310 pounds

Weight After: 240 pounds

The Belly Off! Club, March 2012

READ 'EM AND REAP

Start on the five boosters above right away. Start today, even before you embark on your chosen Belly Off! Back-in-Shape Workout. Which you will begin tomorrow, right?

Your first day of the exercise plan will already put you ahead of most of your fellow Americans fitnesswise. Recent surveys have shown that only about 33 percent of adults get any regular exercise. That's a very scary statistic. These folks are missing out on so many free health benefits that they would gain simply by taking the daily walk we prescribe on [this page](#). But those are benefits you'll be cashing in on, starting from day one. And they are benefits you can put a price tag on. Research in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* shows that people who are 30 to 60 pounds over their ideal weight spend \$450 more on medical expenses per year than normal-weight people do. Men who lose 60 to 100 pounds, studies suggest, could save over \$1,000 annually on doctor bills. Could you use an extra grand this year?

By making fitness a part of your life, you will reap many, many more rewards. Here's a look at what you can expect to gain from following the workout programs in this book.

You'll drop pounds. Exercising burns more calories than sitting on a couch with your face in a bowl of candy corn does. How many more calories? Well, if you don't eat any fake corn, your body burns about 80 calories while watching an hour-long TV show. But go out for a walk for an hour instead, and you'll burn about 320 calories. Not bad.

WEIGHT LOSS

Mind Over Mac Attack

To stop thinking about going to the drive-thru, start thinking about going for a run in the park. According to the journal *Appetite*, mental imagery can reduce your desire to binge on food. When people in a study imagined themselves engaged in their favorite activities, their cravings were less intense.

But don't forget that even after you've finished exercising, your metabolism stays elevated. That doesn't happen on the couch. If you've done high-intensity interval exercise, your calorie-burning fire may stay stoked for up to 42 hours. That means that if you're exercising almost every day, your metabolism is basically always running high. What's more, after a few weeks, when you've built new muscle through exercise, you'll be burning more calories all day and night because muscle requires more energy just to exist on your skeleton than fat does.

You'll reduce your risk of diabetes. As a result of losing weight and shedding your belly, you will reduce the amount of visceral fat surrounding your organs—a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes and heart disease. A new study by Harvard University researchers found that combining resistance training (weight lifting) with aerobic activity for a total of 300 minutes over the course of a week can

reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes by up to 59 percent.

You'll boost your energy. Exercise strengthens that all-important muscle inside your chest—your heart. A lighter body puts less stress on your heart. A lighter body moves more efficiently and nimbly. When your heart and blood vessels aren't working so hard to pump oxygen and nutrients throughout all your limbs, you feel more energetic and empowered to keep going at work and during workouts. Your exercise routines will naturally become more rigorous, and your endurance will skyrocket. In addition, all of this will help you sleep more restfully and deeply. Recently, a study in the journal *Hypertension* demonstrated just how recuperative deep sleep can be. In a sleep study, scientists monitored the slow-wave sleep of a group of men. This is the deep, dreamless sleep that it is difficult to wake from. Those subjects who recorded the most slow-wave sleep were 45 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure than those who logged the least. The researchers say that this deep recuperative sleep triggers brain signals that improve blood vessel flexibility.



Food Diary

Date:

	FOOD/DRINKS & AMOUNTS	FIBER	CALORIES
BREAKFAST			
MORNING SNACK			
LUNCH			
AFTERNOON SNACK			
DINNER			
EVENING SNACK (OPTIONAL)			
		TOTAL FIBER :	TOTAL CALORIES :

You'll be less stressed. Physical activity releases feel-good endorphins that relieve stress, and it takes very little exercise to reap the benefit. A Scottish study of 20,000 adults found that working out for just 20 minutes a week helped lower stress and anxiety while increasing energy and happiness. Other studies show that exercise can have a significant antidepressant effect. European researchers exploring the phenomenon believe they've found out why. It seems that intense exercise causes your adrenal glands to release the stress hormone cortisol into your bloodstream. In response, your blood activates a molecule called anandamide, which signals regions of your brain to release a substance called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF. Too much of a science lesson? All you really need to know is that researchers say this substance, triggered by exercise, protects neurons from damage and acts as an antidepressant.

FIT FACT

Step Up to Go Down

Obese adults are six times more likely to lose weight if they weigh themselves at least once a week, according to a study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

You'll have better sex. Exercise increases sexual arousal in both men and women. When you're fit, you feel better about your body and have more energy for sex. And men who are fit are at low risk for developing erectile dysfunction.

You'll think more clearly. When you exercise, your heart feeds oxygen-rich blood to your brain, nourishing your gray matter. Researchers tracked 1,324 people involved in an aging study at the Mayo Clinic. They discovered that people who exercised moderately at age 50 and older were less likely

develop mild cognitive impairment later in life.

You'll improve your immune function. Experts say that even a short brisk walk 5 days a week can deliver a bigger boost to your immune system than eating oranges and green vegetables.

You'll live longer. It makes sense that all of these benefits of exercise would also translate to a longer, more active life. More and more research is proving the big impact exercise has on reducing disease and even fighting it when it strikes. Here's one example from a study at the University of Michigan: Researchers there examined the muscles of people with an advanced skin cancer. They found that those subjects with stronger, denser muscle tissue were 45 percent less likely to die of the deadly form of skin cancer than those who had less muscle. The researchers say that dense muscle is a reliable sign of better overall health and, perhaps, a stronger immune system.

Another study of more than 5,000 people found that those over age 50 who were highly physically active lived an average of 3½ years longer than those who were sedentary. And you can bet that they lived better, happier, more actively, and more energetically in their later years. All told, not a bad payback for getting back in shape with the Belly Off! Workouts.

IT WORKS FOR ME

Putting a spotlight on your fitness goals and diet details can help motivate you to keep on keeping on. That's what Belly Off! Club member Joe Lopez did. "I've started a fitness blog where I can post goals," he says. You'll be less likely to fall off a workout or nutrition program if you share your progress with the world. Try Word-Press or Posterous to start a fitness blog, or join the Belly Off! Club online at menshealth.com/bellyoff. That's where you can post a profile and share your ups and downs with other members.

A Jump-Start Safety Note

FROM DAVID JACK

If you follow the advice in this book, in just 6 weeks you can expect to see a 15 to 20 percent improvement in your strength and cardiovascular output, as well as significant body fat loss. Most of these early gains will result from improved nutrition—drinking fewer liquid calories, moving more, and making better lifestyle choices. *The Belly Off! Workouts* strength-training component builds and preserves lean muscle tissue, reigniting your metabolism and burning more calories. Exercise is always accompanied by some risk, and this is especially true with strength training. There are three keys to managing risk.

1. Assess your ability and readiness for training. (See the self-screening tests in the appendix.)
 2. Schedule a doctor's checkup to get a clean bill of health before embarking on any new fitness routine. You can raise any problems revealed in your self-screen at that time.
 3. When training, be mentally present. Every rep. Don't daydream or get sidetracked by long conversation. Stay "in the workout." It'll produce a safer training environment and faster improvements.
-

Recognize How Good Fitness Can Feel

JEFF ATWATER

HUDSON, MA THE BELLY OFF! CLUB, SEPTEMBER 2011



THE WAKE-UP CALL

It wasn't an epiphany, but an opportunity. I'd wanted to lose weight and improve my health for a long time. Then one day I heard about a program called Belly off! starting at a nearby gym. I signed up and read *The Belly Off! Diet*. We started with simple bodyweight exercises. They weren't easy, but after the workouts I really felt great. It was that good tiredness and feeling of satisfaction that comes over your body after exercising. That motivated me. I wanted more of that. Well, the program kick-started a journey that found me weighing in at 185 pounds during my physical in December of 2010. Although the drop in the number on the scale has been fun to see, what is more important is that my strength, endurance, and physical health (including other health stats, such as cholesterol) have improved. I'm in better shape now at age 40 than I was in my late 20s and early 30s!

HOW I CHANGED

I recognized the difference between feeling bloated from scarfing a pizza and soda and feeling comfortably full from eating foods containing fiber and protein. Building meals and snacks from whole grains and protein helped me cut out highly processed refined foods and beverages loaded with high-fructose corn syrup. Don't get me wrong—I still enjoy snacks and desserts like ice cream (I like Breyer's—especially vanilla, with its short, easily understood list of ingredients), but I usually make smarter choices for more filling foods like almonds or Greek yogurt with low-sugar granola. Another key change spurred by Belly Off! was that strength, conditioning, and cardio training became a regular part of my life. It was fun to rediscover how good regular activity makes me feel. I started adding weights to my bodyweight workouts. I found myself trying the Men's *Health* poster series workouts and 15-minute metabolic workouts. It was fun to try different things and challenge myself.

THE REWARD

I trained for and ran the Seacoast Half Marathon twice, and then when I turned 40 I ran the Boston Marathon with the Dan Farber Marathon Challenge team in support of cancer research. It was absolutely one of the most amazing experiences of my life. The crowds of people cheering you on; it was incredible. Fitness now, for me—well, it's part of my life. It's part of who I am.

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