



March 3rd, 2012

Is Your Belly Fat Keeping You Awake? The Benefits of Physical Exercise

Daily physical activity is one of the best lifestyle choices we can make. Many of the things we do every day can count (like walking) but most of us need to schedule specific activity time to ensure optimal health. To get optimal health, top forms of exercise include swimming, walking, tai chi and strength training. Aim for 30 minutes/day and be sure to include 2 days/week of strength training.

Types of Fat – Subcutaneous and Visceral

When you look in the mirror, the fat you can see under the skin in your hips, buttocks, and middle is called "*subcutaneous*" fat.

On the inside, the invisible fat around the essential organs (heart, liver, lung etc.) in the chest, abdomen, and pelvis is called "*visceral*" fat.

It's the hidden fat -- the visceral fat -- that is a bigger problem, even for thin people.

Reduce Your Belly Fat – Improve Your Sleep

Visceral belly fat is associated with heart disease, diabetes, dementia, cancers, and other chronic conditions. Researchers from John Hopkins are noting that it is also associated with sleep problems – and sleep problems can contribute to belly fat. In the end it's a vicious circle! But, just a 15% reduction of belly fat can dramatically improve sleep quality.

Belly Fat – Best Exercise

People often ask what the best exercise to target belly fat is. The sad fact is that abdominal exercises produce strong abdominal muscles but don't reduce abdominal fat!

To reduce belly fat requires a balanced, calorie-controlled diet and 60 minutes per day of moderate activity, such as brisk walking. To protect your back, the best abdominal exercise is the "plank", as it targets your core body strength.

What's Your Waist Measurement?

The best way to determine your risk is to measure your waist. Stand up, grab a tape measure and place it level around your waist.

If you're a woman, a waist size less than 35 inches will result in less risk. For a man, less than 40 inches is a great target. "Pear shape," women (who store additional fat on their hips) have a lower chance for complications than "apple shaped" women who retain a wider waistline.

Visit our pharmacists to discuss the benefits of physical activity in your life. You never know how far you can go!