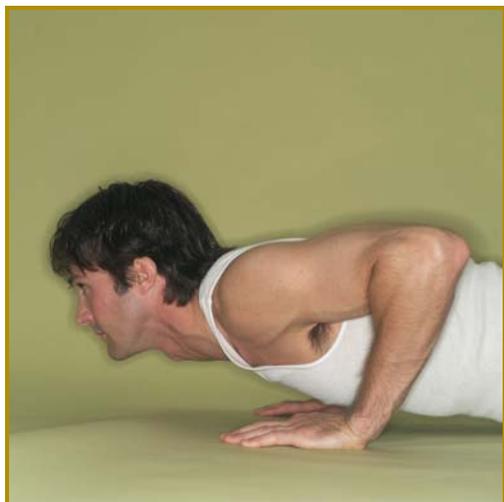


# 3 Weight Loss Tips for Men

*By Dean Anderson, Fitness and Behavior Expert*



If you're a man who's trying to lose weight and get fit, you've probably noticed that most of the books, magazines, and programs on these subjects aren't really aimed at you. Most are for women. And the others seem to have bodybuilders and competitive athletes in mind—not regular guys who simply want to get in shape.

But your needs are different than those of women, and the fitness strategies you should follow aren't the same as those of a bodybuilder. This article is for YOU. It will tackle three of the most common questions regular guys have about weight loss:

1. How fast is too fast to lose weight?
2. How should I eat or exercise when I'm trying to build some muscle and also lose some fat?
3. Should I eat more than 1,200 calories to avoid "starvation mode" problems?

## **I'm losing weight faster than my wife. Is this normal, and how fast is too fast?**

It's true that many men can and usually do lose weight faster than women, but this isn't entirely good news. For one thing, if you share your life with a woman who is also trying to lose weight, you might need a few lessons in domestic diplomacy when she gets frustrated at your seemingly easy and fast results. For another, one of the main reasons that you do lose weight more easily turns out to be a double-edged sword.

The fat that's easiest to lose is the fat stored in the upper body, particularly within the abdominal area—the infamous male beer belly. Men tend to store more fat in this area and less fat in the hips and thighs, while women tend to do the opposite. The "intra-abdominal" or "visceral" fat that makes up that beer belly (it's stored underneath the abdominal muscles) is more metabolically active, which means that it's the fat your body burns first.

The flip side of this "advantage" is that metabolically active fat is dangerous to your health. It's associated with a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, and many other health problems. So while it may be easier to lose this fat, it's also more crucial to your health that you do so—now! That large waist puts you at much higher risk of health problems than people who store weight in the lower body. So don't put it off.

But you don't need a six pack to greatly reduce your health risk. What you want is to lose your keg—to be able to lay down flat on your back without your stomach sticking up higher than your rib cage.

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The other things that help men to lose weight more easily, such as more muscle mass and more testosterone, can be used to your advantage when it comes to shedding that dangerous visceral fat—but *only if you use those muscles*—by doing plenty of cardio exercise and strength training along with watching your diet.

Although you will have weeks where you lose more weight, and weeks when you lose more weight, and weeks when you lose little to nothing, the ideal rate of weight loss for men is still between one-half and two pounds per week (towards the higher end if you have more than 40 pounds to lose and the lower end if you are closer to your goal weight).

**I'm trying to build muscle and also lose fat. Do I need to eat more protein or avoid cardio?**

No. Eating extra protein doesn't build muscle tissue and, unless you're doing something excessive, cardio exercise won't cause you to break down muscle tissue.

You do need adequate protein intake so that your body can repair and rebuild your muscles after exercise—that's when the growth in size and performance actually happens. But a diet that provides 15%-35% of total calories from protein is plenty to meet this need, and there's no muscle building advantage to eating more than this amount of protein. People who do a lot of strenuous physical activity, either as work or as extended bouts of training or exercise, may do better to stay towards the higher end of that recommended protein range, but there's no evidence to suggest that going over 35% is necessary or beneficial. It's the work that your muscles do (specifically, working to fatigue when weight training) that induces muscle growth and development—not how much protein you eat.

How much cardio exercise you should do, and when to do it, is a more complicated question. During extended bouts (over 45 minutes) of moderate to high intensity cardio exercise, your body will gradually increase the percentage of protein (stored in your body as muscle tissue) it uses for fuel. When exercise goes on for 90 minutes or more, the amount of energy provided by protein can be as high as 10-12%, compared to the normal 1-2%. *So, doing cardio exercise for longer than 45 minutes at a time may be counterproductive if you are trying to increase muscle mass.* The best bet for burning maximum calories without sacrificing muscle mass would be shorter, 20-40 minute bouts of higher intensity cardio exercise; interval training, or High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) would be ideal.

Timing of exercise and meals can also be important here. The most significant period for recovery from both strength training and cardio exercise is the first two hours after your exercise ends. That's when your body is really primed to use what you eat to replace the fuel reserves you used up during your workout. If your goal is to add or maintain muscle mass, the best thing you can do soon after your strength workout is to have something to eat—ideally, up to 300 calories with a 3-1 ratio of carbs to protein. A few examples might be; a protein or energy bar, a smoothie (made with fruit juice, yogurt and/or protein powder), yogurt with some fruit, or half a sandwich (peanut butter or turkey, for example) on whole grain bread. Try to do your cardio on different days, or a few hours before or after your strength training, to ensure you have maximum energy available for your strength workout and keep your cardio exercise from using too much protein for fuel.

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**Is it true that men need to eat more than 1,200 calories each day to avoid “starvation mode?”**

For many men, 1,200 calories per day *will* be too low. Because men typically have more muscle mass than women (a function of higher testosterone levels), men and women who weigh the same will have different metabolic rates and calorie requirements. On average, this difference usually works out to about 250-300 calories per day. Therefore, the minimum calorie requirement necessary for maintaining a high metabolic rate will be closer to 1,500 calories per day for most men, and your diet program should reflect this. Keep in mind that this is usually the minimum—eating fewer calories will result in other problems collectively known as “starvation mode,” which can also hurt your weight loss efforts.