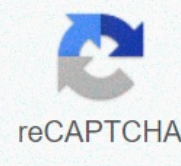




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Todd Huffman Your friends, your cold, your spending habits—science can blame just about everything for filling our jeans to overflowing. But how much extra poundage are these surprising factors really responsible for? We dug through the research to find out what's stalling womens weight loss.The risk: Your Flabby Friends - 2 lbs Palling around with a tubby crowd could be worse than having Rosie O'Donnell as your diet coach. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine looked at the social networks of 12,067 people over 32 years and found that for every 10 pounds a person gained, close friends of the same height gained an average of one to two pounds.Improve your odds instead of making plans to go out for drinks and dinner, catch up with your buds as you sweat on side-by-side elliptical machines, play racquetball, or cruise town on your bikes. Don't take no for an answer!The risk: Credit Cards - 5 lbs Your plastic may be affecting more than just your credit score. Visa conducted a study of 100,000 fast-food restaurant transactions and found that people who pay for their food with a credit card spend 30 percent more than those who pay with cash. Opt to swipe and you could end up with a double quarter-pounder with cheese and a large Coke instead of a quarter-pounder with cheese and medium drink. For the average woman, who visits a fast-food restaurant once a week, that adds an extra 17,160 calories, or 4.9 pounds, per year. Improve your odds! If you must hit the drive-thru, pay cash. You're likely to spend less. Better yet: Go home and make a sandwich. It'll be better for your body and your wallet.The risk: The Sniffles - 40 lbs Forget feeding a cold—a 2007 review in Advances in Food and Nutrition Research found that in animal studies, critters infected with adenovirus-36—one of about 50 human viruses that cause upper-respiratory infections—gained up to four times as much weight as those without it. Scientists speculate that the bug increases the number of fat cells in the body and that it could leave humans lugging around an extra 40 pounds. Improve your odds Believe it or not, a vaccine to fight the fat culprit is in the works. And adenovirus-36 has already been deactivated in lab studies (there are no human tests yet). Until then, wash your hands often, as adenoviruses typically are transmitted through direct contact.The risk: Your Meds - 45 lbs Popping pills for allergies, birth control, depression, or diabetes could be an Rx for a wider rear. According to a report in Pharmacist's Letter, side effects of drugs such as the antidepressant Nardil and the allergy medication Zyrtec can stimulate appetite; that can leave you eating more and gaining up to 45 pounds. Improve your odds If you suspect a scrip is to blame for your suddenly bloated belly, talk to your M.D. about alternative options for the drug you're prescribed. Just make sure you don't stop your current meds without your doctor's say-so. A 2004 study in General Hospital Psychiatry revealed that 5 percent of patients surveyed would never take meds that caused weight gain—even if they had a life-threatening condition. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io It's simple. To show off your abs, you have to burn fat. To burn fat, you have to stoke your metabolism by building muscle. Replacing just 1 pound of fat with muscle will force your body to fry up to an additional 50 calories a day. These straightforward moves work major muscle groups—with an emphasis on your midsection—without adding bulk. Do this abs workout three times a week. Complete 1 set of each ab exercise (designed to work key regions of your core: upper abs, lower abs, obliques, and lower back), then do the rest of the circuit twice. On other days, do light cardio like swimming, walking, or cycling. Make sure you take 1 day completely off. Find a weight you're comfortable lifting—not too easy, but not one that tortures your body either. Don't miss WH's workout "Accelerate the Burn" and "Best Fat-Burning Foods" for expert exercises and meal tips to amp up your daily calorie burn. 1. Medicine Ball Blast Sets: 1 • Reps: 12 to 15Set an adjustable ab bench at a 45-degree angle. Lie down on it with your head toward the floor and hook your feet under the padded support bar. Hold a medicine ball at your chest as you lower yourself A. As you come up, chest-pass the ball straight up (B). Catch it at the top of the movement, then lower yourself and repeat.2. Seated Ab Crunch Sets: 1 • Reps: 12Sit on the edge of a stable chair or bench. Place your hands next to your butt and grip the front of the seat. Lean back slightly and extend your legs down and away, keeping your heels 4 to 6 inches off the floor (A). Bend your knees and slowly raise your legs toward your chest. At the same time, lean forward with your upper body, allowing your chest to approach your thighs (B).3. Saxon Side Bend Sets: 1 • Reps: 6 to 10 each sideHold a pair of lightweight dumbbells over your head, with your elbows slightly bent (A). Keep your back straight and slowly bend directly to your right as far as possible without twisting your upper body (B). Pause, return to an upright ?position, then bend to your left as far as possible.4. Back Extension Sets: 1 • Reps: 12 to 15Position yourself in a back extension station and hook your feet under the leg anchor. Hold your arms straight out in front of you. Your body should form a straight line from your hands to your hips. Lower your torso, allowing your lower back to round, until it's just short of perpendicular to the floor (A). Raise your upper body until it's slightly above parallel to the floor (B). At this point, you should have a slight arch in your back, and your shoulder blades should be pulled together. Pause for a second, then repeat.5. Squat Sets: 2 • Reps: 10 to 12 • Rest: 30 secondsStand with your feet about shoulder-width apart and hold a barbell behind you (A). Keeping your back straight, lower yourself as you inhale, bending from your knees and hips as though you're sitting down (B). Don't let your knees pass your toes. Don't round your back. Stop just before your thighs are parallel to the floor. Hold for a second and then exhale as you slowly stand back up.6. Pulldown Sets: 2 • Reps: 10 • Rest: 30 secondsStand facing a lat pulldown machine. Reach up and grasp the bar with an overhand grip that's 4 to 6 inches wider than your shoulders. Sit on the seat, letting the resistance of the bar extend your arms above your head (A). When you're in position, pull the bar down until it touches your upper chest (B). Hold this position for a second, then return to start.7. Military Press Sets: 2 • Reps: 10 • Rest: 30 secondsSit on an exercise bench, hold a barbell at shoulder height with your hands shoulder-width apart (A). Press the weight straight overhead so that your arms are almost fully extended (B). Hold for a second, then bring it down in front of your shoulders.8. Leg Curl Sets: 2 • Reps: 12 to 12 • Rest: 30 secondsLie facedown on a leg curl machine and hook your ankles under the padded bar (A). Keeping your stomach and pelvis against the bench, slowly raise your feet toward your butt, curling the weight up (B). Come up so that your feet nearly touch your butt and slowly return to start.9. Triceps Pushdown Sets: 2 • Reps: 10 to 12 • Rest: 30 secondsWhile standing, grip a bar attached to a high pulley cable or lat machine with your hands about 6 inches apart. With your elbows tucked against your sides, bring the bar down until it's directly in front of you (A). With your forearms parallel to the floor (the start position), push the bar down until your arms are extended straight down with the bar near your thighs (B). Don't lock your elbows. Return to start.10. Biceps Curl Sets: 2 • Reps: 10 • Rest: 30 secondsStand while holding a barbell in front of you, palms facing out, with your hands shoulder-width apart and your arms hanging in front of you (A). Curl the weight toward your shoulders (B). Hold for a second, then return to start. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io Drzen_Getty Images When many people think of losing weight, one of the first things that comes to mind is getting a totally toned and taut tummy. After all, who doesn't want to be able to slip into a pair of jeans without having to deal with a muffin top? Plus, losing belly fat is a surefire way to improve your health. Research links a larger waist size to heart disease, diabetes, and even some cancers. That said, we hate to break it to you, but doing hundreds of crunches every day isn't the best way to lose belly fat. In fact, exercises that promote spot reduction just don't exist. "Spot reduction isn't a viable approach to losing belly fat," explains fitness trainer and nutrition expert Corey Phelps, creator of the Cultivate by Corey Fitness Program. "But there are some great core-focused exercises that will torch fat all over the body, resulting in a strong and more chiseled core." RELATED: Join Prevention Premium for unlimited access to Prevention.com, including at-home workouts. Celebrity trainer and nutrition expert Jillian Michaels also says that doing a variety of exercises that combine cardio, strength, and core work will ultimately help you reduce body fat. "I'm a big fan of exercises that are core-focused, but work multiple muscle groups simultaneously with a HIT component for added calorie burn," she says. Here are the best exercises and workouts to lose belly fat, according to personal trainers. Need more workout inspiration? Pick up the Tone Up in 15 workout DVD, which is filled with 15-minute total-body workouts that you can do at home. Advertisement - Continue Reading Below 1 Burpees This exercise works your core, as well as your chest, shoulders, lats, triceps and quads, explains Michaels. Since burpees involve explosive plyometric movement, they'll get your heart pumping too.How to do burpees: Stand with your feet shoulder-distance apart and send your hips back as you lower your body toward the ground in a low squat. Then, place your hands right outside of your feet and hop your feet back, allowing your chest to touch the floor. Push your hands against the floor to lift your body up into a plank and then jump your feet just outside of your hands. With your weight in your heels, jump explosively into the air with your arms overhead. 2 Mountain Climbers Like burpees, Michaels is a fan of this moving plank exercise because it works your core, in addition to a slew of other muscles.How to do mountain climbers: Get into a high-plank position with your wrists directly under your shoulders. Keep your core tight, drawing your belly button in toward your spine. Drive your right knee toward your chest and then bring it back to plank. Then, drive your left knee toward your chest and bring it back. Continue to alternate sides. 3 Turkish Get-Up The Turkish get-up is a 200-year-old total-body exercise that involves using a kettlebell, and it's a favorite of celebrity trainer Ramona Braganza. While it is slightly complicated, she says that the total-body conditioning move is seriously effective for blasting belly fat.How to do a Turkish get-up: Holding one kettlebell by the handle with both hands, lie on your side in a fetal position. Roll onto your back and press the kettlebell up toward the ceiling with both hands until the weight is stable on one loaded side. Release your free arm and free leg to a 45-degree angle with your palm facing down. Slide the heel of the loaded side closer to your butt to firmly grip the floor. Pushing through the floor, punch the kettlebell up with the loaded arm and roll onto your side free forearm. Don't shrug your shoulder toward your ear with the supporting side. Be sure to keep your chest wide open. Straighten the elbow on the ground and lift yourself up to a seated position. Weave your front leg through to the back. To protect your knees, your shin on the back leg should be perpendicular to your shin on the front leg. Perfectly align your arms: wrist over elbow, shoulder over elbow over wrist. Raise your torso to make your upper body erect. Swivel your back knee so that your back shin is parallel with your front shin. Get a grip on the floor with your back toes, then take a deep breath, and stand up. 4 Medicine Ball Burpees Phelps suggests adding a medicine ball to your burpee to increase the intensity of the exercise and boost your metabolism—all while building a sleek set of six-pack abs.How to do medicine ball burpees: Standing with your feet shoulder-distance apart, hold a medicine ball with both hands. Extend the ball up overhead, then slam the ball down on the ground as hard as you can, hinging over and sitting your butt back up as you slam. As you hinge over, bend your knees. Place your hands on the ground outside of your feet and jump back into a high-plank position. Keep your body in a straight line. Then, jump your feet back towards the outsides of your hands so that you are squatting. Pick up the ball and press it overhead, extending your body and standing tall. 5 Sprawls The sprawl is basically a burpee on steroids—a full body exercise that works as many muscles as possible and burns calories while shaping and toning upper- and lower-body, especially your abs. "It takes the traditional burpee to the next level by having you touch your chest to the ground, then push-up to plank as you continue the move," explains Braganza.How to do a sprawl: Standing with your feet shoulder-distance apart, squat down and place your hands on the ground. Jump your feet back to a plank and lower your body to touch the ground. Push yourself up to a plank and then jump your feet outside of your hands into a squat. Stand back up. That's one rep. "If you want to burn even more calories, add a jump between each sprawl," Braganza adds. 6 Side-to-Side Medicine Ball Slams "Medicine ball slams are a dynamic, explosive, and highly metabolic exercise that does not simply target one muscle group," explains Chris DiVecchio, trainer and founder of Premier Body & Mind. On the surface, the obliques, hamstrings, quads, biceps, and shoulders are the primary movers of this exercise. "But as time goes on and fatigue sets in, nearly every other muscle in the body, in one way or another, may become involved as a secondary mover which makes this a total gut blaster," he adds. Doing side-to-side ball slams versus overhead slams incorporates more oblique ab work.How to do lateral medicine ball slams: Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart with the medicine ball on one side. Pick up the ball and simply rotate your body as you slam the ball a few inches away from your pinky toe. Make sure to pivot your feet and bend the back knee as you come into a split squat position to catch the ball on one bounce. Alternate sides. Make sure you tighten your core or as you bring the ball overhead and to the side. 7 Overhead Medicine Ball Slams Overhead medicine ball slams strengthen your core as it works against gravity. This exercise also tests your endurance, getting your heart rate up each time you pick the ball up and bring it overhead. To get the most out of this exercise, be sure to use a heavy weighted ball. How to do overhead medicine ball slams: Standing tall with your feet hip-width apart, hold a medicine ball with both hands. Reach both arms overhead, fully extending your body. Slam the ball forward and down toward the ground. Extend your arms toward the ground as you slam and don't be afraid to bend your knees as you hinge over. Squat to pick the ball up and then stand back up. 8 Russian Twists The Russian twist is a core exercise that improves oblique strength and definition, explains DiVecchio. The move, typically performed with a medicine ball or plate, involves rotating your torso from side to side while holding a sit-up position with your feet off the ground.How to do Russian twists: Sit up tall on the floor with your knees bent and feet off the ground. Hold a medicine ball with your hands at chest height. Lean backward with a long, tall spine, holding your torso at a 45-degree angle and keeping your arms a few inches away from your chest. From here, turn your torso to the left and pause to squeeze your left oblique muscles. The movement should come from your ribs and not your arms. 9 BOSU Ball Planks You know that your cardio sessions are crucial when it comes to burning the layer of fat sitting on top of your abdominal muscles. But it's still important to work those abs even as you're trying to shed fat, says New York City-based personal trainer Adam Sanford, founder of Adam Sanford Fitness. His favorite move to do that? Holding plank on a BOSU ball. It's more challenging than a normal plank where your hands are on the floor, because the BOSU tests your balance, says Sanford. "When your body tries to find control as your balance is challenged, your abs, obliques, and deep transverse abdominal muscles are activated," he says. Strengthening these core muscles also helps increase your metabolism, ultimately helping you to burn more calories and fat.How to do BOSU ball planks: Flip a BOSU ball on its rubber side and hold onto the edges of the flat surface with both hands, about shoulder-distance apart. Hold the plank for 30 to 45 seconds, increasing the time as you get stronger. 10 Running On an Incline Running at an incline rather than on a flat surface has been shown to increase total calorie burn by as much as 50 percent, says Jill Penfold, a Los Angeles-based personal trainer. Whether you're outside on a hill or at the gym on an inclined treadmill, start out walking for five to 10 minutes, suggests Penfold. "Your heart rate should elevate pretty quickly as you pick up your pace," she says. Try this treadmill workout: Walk or jog on an incline for five to 10 minutes. Maintain a jog for another five to 10 minutes, then pick your pace up again and start running. "This doesn't have to be an all-out sprint," says Penfold, but you should be working hard enough that you can't carry a conversation. Spend five minutes running, then drop your pace back down to a jog. Continue alternating with five to 10 minutes of jogging and five to 10 minutes of running for 30 to 45 minutes. 11 Rowing Machine Just because you may not have access to open water, it doesn't mean you can't weave this fat-blasting cardio workout into your gym routine. Not only does using a rowing machine get your heart rate way up, which helps you blast calories and burn fat, but it also works muscles in your legs, core, arms, shoulders, and back, says Penfold. Try this 4-minute rowing circuit: Begin with 20 seconds of rowing followed by 10 seconds of rest. Look at how many meters you traveled in that time. (Don't get off the rowing machine or even let go of the handle when you rest, says Penfold.) Repeat this eight times, trying to beat your distance each time. When you're finished