

Bye, Bye Belly!

While I am away on maternity leave, my newsletters will still be published monthly in the form of “Best of Jessica’s Nutrition Notes.” I am including past articles that have been popular and are also relevant to the themes of pregnancy and parenthood. This month, I have tips for helping to lose belly fat, which is a challenge for new moms like myself, as well as for people who tend to store extra fat around their midsections. Whether you’re a new mom or not, I hope that you will find this newsletter informative and helpful along your journey to optimal health.

There’s been a lot of media attention on belly fat lately—and for good reason. Carrying extra weight around your middle, or being “apple-shaped,” is a risk factor for several health conditions, including high blood pressure, high LDL (bad) cholesterol, high triglycerides, insulin resistance and high blood sugar. These conditions can lead to heart disease, strokes, diabetes and even breast, cervical or prostate cancers.

Experts believe that the presence of subcutaneous fat (fat under the skin) at the waist indicates that visceral fat (internal fat around the organs) is present, too. Visceral fat is not always visible since it’s deep inside the body in the spaces surrounding our organs, but it is one of the most dangerous types of fat since it can actively release fatty acids and inflammatory and other reproductive hormones that contribute to heart disease, diabetes and cancers. These substances may also directly affect the liver and its role in blood sugar control and cholesterol production.

Most people associate “apple shape” with men and “pear shape” (carrying extra fat around the hips, buttocks and thighs) with women, and it’s true that hormones can influence body shape. Being “pear-shaped” and moderately overweight is not



as unhealthy as carrying extra fat in the abdomen, since the type of fat that is stored in pear-shaped people does not produce dangerous hormones like the visceral fat in apple-shaped people does, but women can be “apple-shaped” and therefore have the same amount of health risk associated with that shape as men do. Some post-menopausal women may also find that their formerly “pear-shaped” bodies are now “apple-shaped,” an indication that their “pear-shaped” protection has been lost. Advancing age for both women and men plays a role in the development of deep abdominal fat, too.

In fact, being “apple-shaped” may be a more important indicator of health risk than Body Mass Index (BMI) or weight alone. A good way to assess if you have apple-type health risks is to measure your waist circumference (just above your belly button)—35 inches or greater for women and 40 inches or more for

men is considered risky. However, there is evidence that health risks start to rise at smaller waist sizes, too. Body shape is due in large part to genetics, but while you can’t change your genes, there’s plenty you can do to improve your shape. Exercise physiologists have still not found a way to “spot reduce” your problem areas, but exercise and diet can make a big difference. Cardiovascular exercise is important for helping to reduce fat, and muscle building exercises help to improve insulin sensitivity and slow the accumulation of belly fat. Nutrition researchers have recently discovered that replacing some carbohydrates and saturated fat with the right types of “good” fats can make a big difference when it comes to making your tummy smaller.

For people in one major research study with a combination of excess belly fat and insulin resistance, switching from either a high carbohydrate, low fat diet (65% carbs, 20% fat) or a high saturated fat diet (47% carbs, 38% fat—mostly saturated fat) to a diet that emphasizes monounsaturated fat (47% carbs, 38% fat—mostly monounsaturated fat) helped them lose belly fat and improve their insulin sensitivity. What this means for you (even if you don’t have insulin resistance) is that replacing some of your starches like bread, crackers, rice, cereal, pasta, cookies and cakes, as well as most saturated fat like red meat, butter, cream and cheese, with olive oil, olives, nuts, avocados and very dark chocolate will help you lose some belly fat—especially if you also cut your total calorie intake. Extra virgin first cold-pressed olive oil should be the cornerstone of your healthy fat intake, though, so don’t go thinking that you can just eat lots of dark chocolate and lose belly fat. Aside from monounsaturated fats, there is one other type of fat that aids in belly fat loss: omega 3 fatty acids. Other research has shown that eating omega 3 fats is especially



Gelson's registered dietitian, Jessica Siegel, has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are not tailored to specific health problems. Consult your physician before beginning any nutritional program. To contact Jessica, please call her at 1-800-GELSONS.

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helpful for “apple-shaped” individuals when it is eaten in place of saturated fats. These fantastic fats are found primarily in fish and, to a lesser degree, in flax seeds, canola oil and some fortified foods. Try to include at least one of these healthy monounsaturated or omega 3 fats at each meal. **However, be careful about adding excessive amounts of “good” fats since they do contain more than twice the calories of carbohydrates or protein per gram.** See the table on this page for some ways to make those subtle but important dietary changes.

The trick to eating more of these healthy fats *and* losing weight is to eat the fats in place of less healthy fats and starchy carbohydrates. Simply adding these fats to your diet will likely result in weight gain. Making these changes will be easy at home since you can restock your pantry and control the ingredients that you put into the foods you prepare. It will be more challenging if you eat out a lot. Always request that your food be cooked in olive oil instead of other fats at restaurants and replace starchy side dishes with vegetables. Order fish more often than chicken, beef, lamb and pork and skip dessert if you can (you can always eat a piece of dark chocolate when you get home). Additionally, it’s imperative that you read ingredient lists and avoid foods that contain “partially hydrogenated oil” since this type of fat signals your body to store visceral fat, which would be counterproductive to your fat loss efforts.

Emphasizing healthful fats in your diet can be an exciting change since it will enhance the palatability of your diet and improve your health. I know it can be a little scary to eat more fat, since the importance of eating “low fat” has been drilled into us for so many years. What has changed is that now we understand that the *type* of fats we eat plays a significant role in our weight and disease risk—especially if you are “apple-shaped.”

Replacing some of your starches, as well as most saturated fat, with olive oil, olives, nuts, avocados and very dark chocolate will help you lose some belly fat.



INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Cheese omelet with a whole-wheat bagel	Omega 3-fortified eggs cooked in olive oil with a slice of flourless whole-grain toast
Cereal with 2% milk and a glass of juice	Plain oatmeal with walnuts, blueberries and unsweetened soy milk (recipe next page)
Chicken salad sandwich	Tuna sandwich with avocado spread (recipe next page) on flourless whole-grain bread
Energy bar	Carrot sticks with almond butter
Cheese and crackers	Guacamole with baked tortilla chips
Caesar salad	Spring mix with Marcona almonds, olives, olive oil and lemon juice
Pasta with meat sauce	Spaghetti squash with walnut pesto
Breaded veal or turkey cutlets	Baked salmon with olive tapenade (see recipe card)
Beef and broccoli stir fry with white rice	Stir-fried vegetables with shrimp and cashews cooked in canola oil
Baked potato with sour cream	Roasted baby potatoes tossed with olive oil and rosemary (recipe next page)
Creamed spinach	Spinach sautéed in olive oil with pine nuts and currants (recipe next page)
Cookies or cake	Dark chocolate (at least 60% cacao)

POWER OATMEAL

Serves: 3

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup *WestSoy* organic unsweetened vanilla soy milk
- 1 cup *Silver Palate* thick and rough oatmeal
- ⅓ cup *Melissa's* organic dried blueberries
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1½ tablespoons *Wholesome Sweeteners* organic raw blue agave nectar
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon *Flanigan Farms* walnut pieces

Directions:

1. Heat soy milk in a small pot over medium-high heat until little bubbles form on the surface. Stir in oats, blueberries and salt. Lower heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally until the oats are tender and most of the liquid is absorbed, about eight to ten minutes.
2. Remove from heat and stir in cinnamon, nutmeg, and agave nectar. Place ⅔ cup oatmeal in each bowl and top with three tablespoons of walnuts.

AVOCADO SANDWICH SPREAD

Serves: 7

Ingredients:

- 1 very ripe organic avocado
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon *Fage* TOTAL 0% Greek yogurt

Directions:

1. Cut avocado around the pit along the seam. Twist halves apart. Use a spoon to scoop out the pit. Make several cuts in a grid pattern down to the skin without cutting through the skin. Use the spoon to scoop the avocado chunks into a shallow bowl. Mash the avocado with a fork until smooth. Stir in lime juice, salt and cayenne.
2. Tilt the opened yogurt container so that any water flows to one side. Measure out one tablespoon of yogurt from the dry side of the container. Stir it into the avocado. Cover tightly with plastic wrap until ready to use.

ROASTED BABY POTATOES with OLIVE OIL & ROSEMARY

Serves: 7

Ingredients:

- 1 pound baby purple potatoes (or other baby potatoes), halved
- 1 tablespoons *Napa Valley* organic olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ⅛ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large sprig fresh rosemary, broken into several pieces

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400° Fahrenheit. Place potatoes on a baking sheet and toss with olive oil, garlic powder, salt, pepper and rosemary pieces. Cook for about 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes, until potatoes are tender and lightly browned.



SPINACH with PINE NUTS & CURRANTS

Serves: 5

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup *Sun-Maid* dried Zante currants
- ½ cup very hot water
- ¼ cup *Melissa's* organic pine nuts
- 18 ounces organic baby spinach, washed and drained, but not dried
- 4 teaspoons *Napa Valley* organic olive oil
- 1 medium *Melissa's* organic onion or two very small onions, finely diced
- 2 cloves *Melissa's* organic garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon cinnamon

Directions:

1. Soak currants in very hot water while you prepare other ingredients.
2. In a large, deep pot with a lid, toast the pine nuts over medium heat until lightly browned. Stirring occasionally for about four minutes. Remove nuts and set aside.
3. Add the damp spinach to the pot and cover to wilt it, stirring occasionally for three to four minutes. When spinach is just wilted, transfer it to a cutting board and discard the green water. Coarsely chop the spinach and blot any excess water that runs out with paper towels.
4. Add olive oil to the pot and heat it over medium heat. Add onion and cook to soften, but not brown it, about 15 minutes. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds. Drain the currants. Stir in currants, spinach, pine nuts, salt, pepper, and cinnamon. Toss and cook about two minutes until everything is heated through.



Caring for Baby Teeth

I recently met a pediatric dentist, I'll call him Dr. Babyteeth, who told me about two alarming issues that he sees routinely in his practice. After doing a little research, I feel that whether you're a parent, future parent, grandparent, child caregiver, or even know someone who is, this information could help save the teeth of a child you know.

The first problem Dr. Babyteeth told me about is called "baby bottle tooth decay," also known as early childhood tooth decay, usually seen in kids around two or three years old. Basically, too many babies and toddlers are being put to bed with bottles that contain juice, formula or milk. These children fall asleep while sucking on a bottle filled with liquids that contain carbohydrates and sugars. Bacteria in the mouth break down these carbohydrates into acids, which (after repeated exposures) can cause the upper teeth to begin to decay (the bottom teeth are usually protected by the tongue and saliva). This problem appears to be more prevalent when someone other than a parent, such as a nanny or teacher, puts a child to sleep. If you suspect that a primary caregiver is putting a child to sleep with a bottle filled with anything but water, it is important to inform the parents about the risks of this practice.

The second problem that Dr. Babyteeth told me about is called dental fluorosis. It is caused by over-ingestion of fluoride. The mineral fluoride is important for making tooth enamel strong and resistant to decay. It is added to drinking water in Orange County, Beverly Hills, and most of Los Angeles County (a program that began in 1999). This is an adequate amount of fluoride to help strengthen children's teeth. However, many children drink only bottled water and their parents therefore give them fluoride supplements. Unfortunately, the philosophy that "if a little is good, then a lot must be better" comes into play here, and some parents may end up giving too much of the mineral to their children. As a result,



adult teeth can grow in with white specks (in mild cases) or are pitted with brown stains (in severe cases). Fluorosis occurs only during tooth development, i.e. in young children, and its damage is permanent. Prevention is important, so fluoride supplementation should be discussed with a dentist and instructions should be followed carefully. Once teeth are grown in and a child can spit, a small amount of fluoride toothpaste can be used to brush teeth, but should not be swallowed (this can be another contributor to fluorosis). Topical fluoride in toothpaste may be helpful for preventing and repairing damage to adult and baby teeth.

Nutrition-wise, there are several practices that can help prevent childhood tooth decay. Eating sweet, starchy, and sticky foods can lead to cavities and tooth decay, especially if these foods are eaten frequently. Saliva helps protect tooth enamel by neutralizing and washing away acids in the mouth. More saliva is produced during meals than during snacks,

so if a child is going to eat these carbohydrate-rich foods, they should do so with meals, not as snacks. This is not to imply that carbohydrates are "bad." In fact, they can be very important sources of energy and nutrients for children, especially in whole-grain form. Water should also be emphasized and sweetened drinks, like soda, should be consumed rarely, if at all. Aside from fluoridated water, the mineral fluoride also occurs naturally in small amounts in fish, seafood, tea, vegetables and fruit. A balanced diet that contains minimally processed foods and stresses whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats and low-fat and non-fat dairy can help build healthy children with healthy teeth.

You may be wondering why baby teeth are even that important, since they eventually all fall out by age 11 and are replaced by adult teeth. The fact is that baby teeth are very important for helping the child's mouth develop for proper biting and chewing of food, ingesting a variety of foods to prevent nutritional deficiencies, speech development, holding space for adult teeth, and for a nice smile. Prevention of dental problems is important not only for preserving a parent's wallet, but also for avoiding fear of the dentist that can be created when a young child has to undergo extensive dental work.

Tooth-Saving Snack Foods

Applegate Farms sliced turkey breast or roast beef

Organic Valley string cheese

Horizon Organic cottage cheese

Crunchy vegetables, like carrots and jicama

Gelson's Finest organic omega-3 eggs, hard-boiled

Edamame (green soy beans)

Flanigan Farms nuts

BON APPETIT!

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If you have any questions, please feel free to call Jessica at 1-800-GELSONS (435-7667) or visit our website www.gelsons.com for more nutrition information and store locations.