

What your body fat says about you and how you can change that message

Debunking myths is always a fun thing. Everyone is interested in a challenge and standing out from the crowd, so today we will kick off a series of articles where we turn around preconceived notions of spot reduction (the dropping of body fat from one specific area of the body) and optimal body composition, and instead of supposedly leaving things to fate and resigning ourselves to the hand we were always told that we were dealt, look at how we can regain control of our bodies and radically improve our physiques and athletic performance through optimal hormonal modulation – improving your physique and your health by improving your own hormonal profile.

What do you really know about your body?

You AskMen readers are a canny bunch. You know your nightclubs and your cars, you definitely know your beautiful girls, and most of you seem to know your way around the gym too. You know that heavy basic compound movements build muscle mass, that you need to be slightly less erratic with your lifestyle than Britney Spears if you want to make progress in the gym, and that it's impossible to spot reduce those love handles. This last point is especially obvious, after all every expert you have ever read has told you that spot reduction is impossible and that fat is lost from all over the body and never from one localised place. Only a dummy who buys those “electro stimulation for lean abs” kits (absolute quackery by the way) on the Shopping Channel would ever think otherwise.

Man Boobs versus Love Handles – what's the difference

Yet stop and think for a minute. Never automatically buy into anything a so-called expert tells you (including yours truly), let's use a bit of logical reasoning. First of all *why* is it that so many of us are interested, a brief visit to one of my London facilities will show even the casual observer that interested is more like obsessed, in ditching certain specific areas of unsightly flesh? Because most of you reading this are male, I would speculate that the majority are most interested in shedding a bit of blubber around the belly button (we are more susceptible to the effects of the stress hormone cortisol than women, hence we store fat more readily in this area – but more on that later). Then again, there will also be a fair proportion who want nothing more than to be rid of their love handles now that the spring weather reminds us that summer is inexorably approaching. And no doubt there are some of you with the dreaded man boobs – you guys have got bigger problems than ugly fat deposits, squatting to pee and needing cuddles after sex to name but two, but I have yet to meet a man who is proud of his jiggly chest. Now if, as you have always been led to believe, all fat is the same and you can't selectively “burn it off”, then why on earth does it sit its lardy self at different speeds, in different quantities, on different parts of our bodies? If all fat is equal, then surely it would be laid down in a nice even layer everywhere on everybody.

Which raises the subject of the second aspect of fat distribution that I'd like you stop and ponder awhile on. When you see Betty, sorry I mean Benny, sashaying across the football pitch with his

training bra firmly holding his mighty “pecs” in place, what do you automatically think to yourself? If its “nice rack” then AskMen is probably not the right place for you, but if it’s “this poor chap has localised body fat distribution patterns consistent with female hormone issues, most notably the aromatisation of testosterone into estrogen” and /or “Benny is turning into a bird” then full marks and go to the top of the class. It shouldn’t then take a genius to figure out that if we address Benny’s hormonal issues then his moobs (man boobs) should thankfully become a thing of the past. And if we can apply this theory to one area of local fat distribution, then we can also apply it to all the other areas too.

Nature versus Nurture – we are slaves to both

Any, and I do mean any, disproportionate distribution of body fat is caused by a combination of your own genetics and unique biochemistry interacting with your environment. In other words, nature and nurture combining. We see it more noticeably with women, perhaps because we spend more time studying them. Did you really think it was a mere coincidence that so many gorgeous Latin girls morph into wide loads as soon as they hit 30? Or that Anglo Saxon girls turn pear shaped whereas Slavic girls develop thick upper arms that would have made Geoff Capes proud? This is because their genotypes mean differing hormonal reactions and this in turn means a different distribution of body fat. The lesson here should be obvious - he who controls hormones controls body composition.

BioSignature Modulation – you can control your hormones

I would love to be able to claim credit for formulating the system that has allowed us to dissect fat distribution patterns, their hormonal causes, and the ways to then modulate the hormonal profile so as to optimise body fat composition (spot reduce in other words). Full credit for that however, goes to Charles Poliquin, the leading American based strength coach of countless top professional athletes, who first brought this to the attention of the world and personally instilled in me the overwhelming passion to be firmly entrenched at the very forefront of the real world application of scientific research on health, peak physical performance and conditioning. This hormonal optimisation system, christened by Charles as BioSignature Modulation, is, in the hands of a skilled practitioner with experience of fine tuning body composition, the single best and most effective way to get in shape because everything is tailored to the individual’s unique biochemistry. Modulating endogenous hormonal levels, as opposed to taking the easy way out and using fat burning / muscle building exogenous hormone drugs, takes skill and what I call “educated effort”. Nothing can be left to chance and all aspects of an individual’s physical and mental influences need to be scrutinised – gym and diet are important yes, but the chain being only as strong as its weakest link cliché holds very true also. An optimal hormonal profile is only achieved via a balanced approach that covers every permutation of the correct and highly individual-specific protocols for exercise, nutrition, supplementation with herbal and other related products, sleep, digestion, relaxation, and any other lifestyle factor that can impact upon physical, emotional, and mental energies.

Lessons to be Learned

Always question what you are told and think through the logic in everything that is “supposed” to happen to your body. Look to the real reasons as to why your body behaves differently from that of your friends, and remember that the optimal hormonal profile for both muscle building and fat loss is within your control.

This is the start of a series of articles, and later instalments will deal with the nitty gritty of why your hormonal profile may cause you to carry fat in one particular place, or even make it impossible for you to put on any appreciable muscle. In the next instalment we will look at why those of you with love handles need to radically overhaul your diet and see just how the most effective fat burner for unsightly “back fat” isn’t one of the popular thermogenic agents but something infinitely healthier and better for you.

About the Author:

Nick Mitchell is a personal trainer and strength, conditioning, and nutritional coach who specialises in body composition and reprogramming for fat loss and muscle gain. His clients run the gamut from Victoria’s Secret models to professional bodybuilders, and he is known for his success in rapidly transforming a body in as little as 4 weeks. He is the head coach and MD of Ultimate Performance, one of the UK’s leading personal training companies.

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