When you’re chasing a goal to get in shape, build muscle, and look your best, fat loss is a big piece of the puzzle. But just exactly how do you lose fat?

As a coach and trainer, I’ve heard this question thousands of times from clients. And it usually goes something like this:

“But Ryan, I’ve tried everything to lose fat. Gnarly weight training workouts, extended cardio sessions, group classes. I’ve even spent a small fortune on diet pills and fat loss supplements. And nothing seems to work. What’s the secret to losing fat?”

The Failure of Fat-Loss Fads

Been there, done that? If you’ve been spinning your wheels trying to lose fat, you’re not alone. But don’t beat yourself up about it. There’s a ton of misinformation out there about what works and what doesn’t. (Here’s a hint, bro science isn’t the answer.)

After working with thousands of people in pursuit of fat loss, and testing every strategy myself, I’ve developed a fat loss program to help you boost metabolism and torch fat for good. And it doesn’t involve fad diets, crazy amounts of cardio, dangerous-throw-your-back-out workouts, or supplements loaded with empty promises.

What should I do? Do I need a strategy?
Follow These Proven Fat-Loss Strategies

In fact, the secret to fat loss is a lot simpler than you might realize. The right combination of high-intensity interval training, weight lifting, calories and macronutrients, meal timing, and a variety of other factors, will help you achieve your fat loss goals.

To get you started, I’m giving away 10 fat-loss strategies from my program to point you in the right direction. Forget about the fat-loss fads and bro science that only leads to dead ends, and put these health habits to work to help you burn fat, boost metabolism, improve your body composition, and feel better.
Get Fit with HIIT

If you want to rev up your heart rate, boost your metabolism, and torch a ton of calories in a short amount of time, make high-intensity interval training part of your fat loss plan. In a recent study, researchers found that HIIT helped boost fat loss by up to 36 percent. The HIIT workout used in the study: 4 minutes of pedaling a stationary bike fast, 2 minutes of rest, for 10 rounds. But you don’t need to spend that much time on HIIT to burn fat.

Do This:
Finish off a lifting workout with about 20 minutes of HIIT. (Pick an exercise: jump roping, cycling, sprinting, mountain climbers, jumping jacks, burpees.) Complete as many reps as possible in 1 minute. Rest 1 minute. Repeat 10x. Fit this into your workout schedule at least three times a week for a month.

How It Works:
High-intensity interval training burns a ton of calories and fat while you’re working out. But it also triggers a response called excess post-oxygen consumption, which means you keep burning fat for up to 24 hours after your workout is over.

Track Your Eating Habits

You’ve probably heard the mantra, “you can’t out exercise a bad diet.” And it’s true. How do you know if your diet is good or bad if you’re not tracking it. Seriously, what did you have to eat yesterday? Last week? If you’re not doing this right now, forget about obsessing over a meal plan and the right macronutrients. In a recent study, researchers found that people who kept a daily log of their eating habits for six months lost twice as much fat as people who didn’t, regardless of other factors.

Do This:
Download a mobile app like MyFitnessPal or LoseIt, or use the web-based version. Log everything you eat for at least a week. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, drinks. Then take a closer look at your calories per day and food choices.

How It Works:
Keeping track of your food choices helps you identify eating patterns that can sabotage your efforts to lose fat like stress, overeating, time of day, access to empty-calorie foods and drinks, skipping meals, frequently eating at restaurants, etc.
Treat Yourself to a Cheat Meal

The typical dietary approach to losing fat involves intense calorie deficits for long periods of time. And in case you haven’t attempted this yourself, here’s some helpful advice. It doesn’t work. It’s just too hard for most people to stick to a restrictive diet for long periods of time. And instead of being beneficial it usually backfires, as in slower metabolism or worse, binge eating. In fact, research shows that 95 percent of people fail at fat loss by eating this way.

Of course you need to spend some time in a calorie deficit for fat loss. But following a flexible dieting plan works a lot better than eating bread crumbs for weeks. Work on cleaning up your diet and eating healthy most days. But go ahead and celebrate with a cheat meal once a week or once a month.

Do This:
Stick to a healthy eating plan for a week. Hit your calorie and macronutrient goals. Then celebrate with a cheat meal. Go ahead, have a burger and fries, a little extra dessert, or toss back a beer, for one meal. Then get back on track.

How It Works:
After a while of eating in a calorie deficit your metabolism can slow down. By having a cheat meal or high-carb day it can boost your leptin levels and get you burning fat again.”
Drink More Water

How much water are you drinking per day? Chances are it’s not enough. Especially if you’re trying to lose fat by working hard in the gym. But does being well-hydrated really make a difference. A recent study found that people who are chronically dehydrated are 1.59 times more likely to be obese than those who drink up. Aim to drink about 2 to 4 liters of water a day to support your fat loss goals.

Do This:
Get a 2-4 liter water bottle. Fill it up every day, and keep it with you. Home, office, in the car. Drink generously at every meal, and take smaller sips throughout the day. It’s easier to keep track of your water intake this way, than randomly drinking glasses of water and guessing.

How It Works:
Drinking water helps you lose fat by making you feel fuller longer. But the benefits don’t stop there. Drinking water helps your liver metabolize fat and improves glycogen storage, which your body uses as an energy source. Staying hydrated also supports your metabolism to burn fat, muscle growth and recovery.

Count on Compound Exercises

Forget about isolation exercises like bicep curls and leg extensions for now. That shouldn’t be your focus when your primary goal is fat loss. Instead, your workouts should include compound exercises like squats, deadlifts, and the bench press. Why? Training the major muscle groups this way results in greater energy expenditure, boosts metabolism, and increases fat loss, according to a recent study.

Do This:
Fit squats, deadlifts, and the bench press into your training plan once a week. Go for 4 sets per exercise and 10-12 reps per set. Keep rest to a minimum (about 30 seconds) between sets to maximize fat loss.

How It Works:
Compound exercises train all the major muscle groups, including your chest, back and legs. And the more muscle mass you have, the more fat and calories you’ll burn.
Get Your Zzzs

If you’re eating clean and hitting your workouts, what difference does a little sleep make? A lot more than you think. The average adult needs 7 to 8 hours of sleep for best health. And you may need even more to support recovery if you’re working hard to lose fat. Research shows that lack of sleep can actually interfere with fat loss, leave you feeling hungrier, and more likely to binge on foods that won’t help you hit your fat-loss goal.

Do This:
Figure out your ideal bedtime, based on when you wake up in the morning. For example, if you wake up at 6 a.m., you should be asleep around 10 p.m. An hour before bedtime, shut off the TV and all electronics. Create a bedtime routine that helps you relax and feel sleepy. If you can’t get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night, try to work in a nap during the day.

How It Works:
Lack of sleep causes your body to produce elevated levels of a stress hormone called ghrelin. Higher levels of ghrelin trigger your body to store fat for energy. Lack of sleep also elevates cortisol levels, the hormone linked to food cravings.
Dial in Your Diet
What should you be eating when you’re trying to lose fat? If you followed tip No. 2 to track your eating habits, you’ve got some good info on what you’re eating. Figure that out, and it will be easier to dial in your diet. Dieting for fat loss doesn’t have to be complicated. Eat more whole foods: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, fish, nuts and seeds, and legumes. Drink plenty of water. And get the right balance of macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats, and protein). Planning ahead, smart grocery shopping, cooking at home more often, and even measuring your food, can have a big impact on fat loss.

Do This:
Take a look at your diet to see what you’re doing right and where you can improve. Then make adjustments. For example, a healthy mid-afternoon snack like hummus and vegetables is a great way to avoid binging on a candybar. Not getting enough protein? Add some eggs, peanut butter, protein shake, fish, or lean meat to meals and snacks. Need to cut back on calories? Replace high-calorie treats with fresh fruit, yogurt parfaits, sorbet, popcorn, or whole grain toast and peanut butter. FYI - you can’t out exercise a bad diet.

How It Works:
When you eat the right foods, and create a calorie deficit through diet and exercise, your body burns fat for energy.

Reduce Stress
Here’s another culprit that may be sabotaging your best efforts to lose fat. Stress. Everybody experiences stress at some point. But it’s how you deal with it that makes a difference. If you’re not managing stress in healthy ways, research shows it’s actually a factor that can pack on the pounds around your waistline. Try yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises, or find other ways to keep your stress level under control to support your fat loss goals.

Do This:
Create a daily routine to help you destress. Set aside just 10 to 15 minutes a day for one of the activities above, and make it a habit. If that’s not enough to combat stress, talk to a friend, counselor or professional for help.

How It Works:
Like lack of sleep, high stress is another factor that triggers a spike in cortisol levels, the hormone that causes cravings. Research shows it may even trigger belly fat storage.
Find a Partner to Push You

If you’re always training on your own, you’re more likely to skip a workout or go easy when you really should be working harder to burn fat and build muscle. Even the most disciplined athletes work with a coach or trainer because it’s a proven strategy to help improve performance, accountability, and consistency. If you want to burn fat and get results faster, train with a partner, coach, or personal trainer who will push you.

Do This:
Check in with your friends who are already working out, and see if you can work out a schedule to train together. Find someone with similar fat-loss goals and hold each other accountable by checking in on training and progress at least once a week. Or hire a coach or personal trainer who will help you stick to a fat-loss plan.

How It Works:
Losing fat isn’t just about diet and exercise. It’s also a mental game that requires changing behaviors. It’s possible to do this on your own. But train with a partner or surround yourself with people who have similar goals to lose fat, and you’re more likely to see results faster, according to a recent study.

ENJOY IT WITH FRIENDS!
Commit

If you’re serious about losing fat, you have to commit. It’s not complicated, but you have to be willing to work at it to get results. Along the way, you may not hit every workout or stick to the eating plan with 100 percent consistency, but you have to try. If something goes off course, you have to commit to get back on track with your diet and exercise habits to hit your fat loss goals.

Do This:
Losing fat might be hard. But it’s not complicated. If you’re willing to put in the work, exercise, eat right, and make smart lifestyle choices consistently, you’ll get results.

How It Works:
Commit to losing fat, and tell everyone about it. Take a before selfie and write down your fat loss goal. Email your friends. Post on social media. And get to work. You’ll be more likely to stick with your diet and workout plans to lose weight when you make a commitment and create accountability.
In my fat loss plan, I've laid out all the details to maximize fat loss with a specific workout plan, diet and nutrition strategies, and lifestyle habits to help you shred fat, improve your body composition, and master behaviors that will keep you lean for life. Ready? Let’s do this.

Still have questions about how to lose fat? Send me an email info@ryanspiteri.com or click HERE to learn more about the complete fat loss program.

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