

How Fast Can You Decrease Your Body Fat Percentage?

by ERIN ZEGGERT July 18, 2017



Body fat percentage measures your body weight composition. Specifically how much of your weight comes from fat vs. lean mass. A healthy body fat percentage is 18 to 24% for the average male and 25 to 31% for the average female. The upper portions of these body fat ranges border on unhealthy and levels below these ranges are associated with higher levels of fitness. Your body fat percentage is a better indicator of overall health than weight alone. You can reduce body fat through a combination of cardio, resistance training, and diet. How quickly you can lose body fat varies from person to person.

Safe Body Fat Loss

Weight loss guidelines recommend a one to two pound per week weight loss rate however there is no specific body fat loss guideline. Experts at the American Council on Exercise agree that a one percent loss of body fat per month is safe and achievable for most. Since many methods to measure body fat are error prone they recommend only checking your progress every one to two months. Weight loss alone does not indicate fat loss.

How to Shed Body Fat

To shed body fat cardio, resistance training and a healthy diet should be followed. Cardio will help increase the number of calories burned. Intensity level should be in the moderate to vigorous range. Resistance training increases the number of calories the body burns at rest. It also increases lean body mass, which will help your body fat percentage. A healthy diet with a daily calorie deficit of 500 calories will help you lose the recommended one pound per week. Doing all three of these will burn more body fat, while leaving one out will burn more lean body mass.

Measuring Body Fat

There are a few methods to measure body fat. The most common method is the skin fold test, based on the assumption that 50 percent of body fat is under the skin. Calipers are used to measure at the chest, thigh and abdomen for men, and the tricep, thigh and supraillium. These measurements are used to calculate overall body fat. This method is most accurate when done by a certified personal trainer or other health professional. A BOD POD and bioelectrical impedance devices can also be used. These generally have a higher cost and are less readily available.

Assessing Progress Between Body Fat Measurements

Body fat percentage should only be measured once every one to two months, however there are other methods to assess progress in between. Measure your weight once every one to two weeks. You should see an average weight loss of one pound per week. Another way to assess progress is to take measurements. Using a cloth tape measure, measure around the chest, waist, hip and thigh once every one to two weeks. Measurements should decrease as you lose fat. Neither of these methods will tell you how much body fat has been lost, but they can show that you are moving in the right direction.



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