

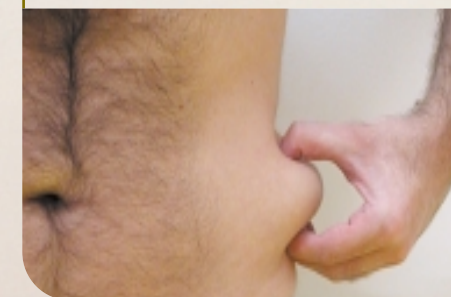
# Couch potato to beach boy

When it comes to suffering **health problems** from being **overweight**, **men** are just as susceptible as women. Here's a simple plan to help your man **fight the flab** – without him or you busting a gut...

## Pinch it

Having a spare tyre around his belly poses more of a health risk than having fat collect on his hips and bum. But more serious than that is the fat you can't see.

Known as visceral fat, it sits in the abdominal cavity and you might not even know it's there. If your chap has an expanded waistline, but a hard belly – one where you can't actually grab much flab when you pinch his skin – it's a good idea to see a doctor. Subcutaneous fat, the kind you can pinch, is far less of a risk.



**M**aybe it's because men are from Mars and women are from Venus and these planets' orbits have different gravitational pulls, because fat collects in different areas depending on your gender.

While women tend to gain weight around the hips, men are more likely to collect fat around the waist – those notorious wobbly spots known as beer bellies, spare tyres and love handles. Gravity, however, can shift. And so can his paunch.

Unfortunately, the waistline area causes most of the health problems due to obesity. Heart disease, diabetes and arthritis are some of the health risks men can reduce by giving their spare tyres the heave-ho.

The best way for your man to lose his love handles is to subject them to a two-pronged attack, which involves reducing calorie intake (eating less) and increasing activity (exercising more).

## Tummy tip

**Steer him clear of faddy diets, as they don't usually work in the long term. Your man needs to start eating more healthily and keep it up.**

## Balanced diet

Poor nutrition leads to the number-one male killer – heart disease – especially if your other half can't resist a diet that's high in saturated fat (dairy products, red meat and junk food). Poor nutrition also piles on the pounds.

Eating a varied diet means:

- Reducing daily calorie intake and following a low-fat, high-fibre diet.
- Cutting down on red meat, dairy products and fried/fast food – which means avoiding hamburgers, kebabs and pizzas.
- Eating more fruit and vegetables – the experts recommend five portions a day.
- Upping fish, as it contains the same protein as red meat, but without all that unhealthy saturated fat. And oily fish such as tuna, sardines and mackerel give a boost of healthy essential fatty acids, too.
- Increasing the amount of high-energy, complex carbohydrates – whole grains, brown rice, wholemeal pasta and wholemeal bread – in his diet will help fill him up.

## Work it out

Exercise helps increase life expectancy, lowers blood pressure, relieves stress, boosts the immune system and, of course, burns

## Tummy tip

**Posture counts. Stand and sit up straight, square those shoulders and pull in that stomach. A good posture can improve abdominal muscles and vice versa.**

calories. Aerobic exercise – which is any form of sustained exercise that uses large muscles of the body – will help your man to lose weight by increasing his metabolism – both while he's exercising and for several hours after.

Does your beloved couch potato claim to hate exercise? There are many enjoyable forms of aerobic exercise that won't take up too much of his time:

- **Cycling** This is a great fat-burner, which also builds muscle tone – mainly in the legs – and stamina. If he's not tempted to cycle to and from work or to the shops, an exercise bike in front of *Match Of The Day* might prove more appealing!
- **Swimming** This is an aerobic workout that also improves muscle tone over the whole body. What's more, it's low impact – because the water supports the body – which means there's less risk of injury
- **Running** This is great for fat-burning, muscle-toning and building stamina.

He'll need a good pair of running shoes to protect his joints, as jogging/running is a high-impact sport

● **Adventuring** If your man is the more adventurous type, skiing, in-line skating, rugby, kayaking, rowing, football, racquet sports and hiking are great calorie burners. And they're fun.

If the gym, running or cycling really don't appeal to your exercise-shy man, there are other calorie-burning activities that will fit in easier with his daily life. For example:

- Kicking a football around the garden.
- Walking around while talking on the telephone.
- Doing all those chores he's been putting off – digging the garden or clearing out the attic – and doing them regularly.
- Taking a short walk during his lunch break or, better still, a long one.
- Walking up the stairs rather than using the lift or the escalators.
- Parking further away from the shops and then walking the rest of the way.

Just 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day, three times a week, can do wonders for both his health and the size of his

paunch. But, he needn't do a full 30 minutes in one session. Studies have shown that just 10 minutes of exercise, three times a day, is an effective way to improve your health.

## Tummy tip

**Lots of stomach exercises will eventually give him a six-pack to die for – but, if he's carrying weight around his midriff, you won't be able to see it.**

## Ideal weight

Of course, big does not necessarily mean fat. A large, heavy man may be carrying lots of muscle, while a much lighter, smaller man might well be carrying more fat by comparison. To determine whether your man is overweight or not, calculate his body mass index (BMI), which directly relates height to weight.

First, measure his height and weight in metres and kilograms. Then divide his weight by the square of his height in metres. Unless you're a maths wizard, you'll need a calculator to do this – better still, ask your doctor to do it. Men with a BMI of 25 or more are considered to be overweight (more than 31 is considered obese).

## Bin the beer

There's a very good reason for calling it a beer belly. A small amount of alcohol – two units, or one pint of beer, two glasses of wine or two pub measures of spirits – per day can help protect against heart disease, but any more can do a great deal of harm, both mentally and physically. The Department Of Health recommends that, for men, three to four units a day or fewer indicates no significant risk to health, while regularly drinking four or more poses an increased risk.

Alcohol also has a very high calorific content, but because the body can't store alcohol as fat, it burns it off straight away. So, while he's burning off his pints of lager, he's not getting rid of that unwanted fat. Plus, alcohol is an appetite stimulant – so now you know why he always hankers for curries and kebabs at chucking-out time.

## From sofa spud to six pack?

So, once you've taken your loveable couch potato in hand – got him eating healthily, exercising regularly and swapping his booze for good old water – just sit back and watch in amazement as your beer-bellied bloke turns into a beach-bod boy (well, a much healthier hubby at the very least!).