

# Fitness with Cindy

## The Ultimate List Of Flat-Stomach Foods (And The Foods You Should Avoid!)

We all want to feel great in our clothes, but fitness is only half the battle. Slimming your waistline has as much to do with your choices in the kitchen as your workouts in the gym!

To firm and flatten your midsection, include more of these foods in your diet whenever you can.

### 1. Green Tea

Aside from being loaded with antioxidants, green tea comes with a number of health benefits including the potential ability to increase the number of calories you burn. There have been several studies linking green tea compounds to fat loss and weight loss; in one of them, men who took green tea extract before working out burned 17% more fat than men who didn't take the supplement.

### 2. Spinach

Spinach is a superfood in so many ways. It's loaded with nutrients like folate, riboflavin, vitamin B6, iron and magnesium. But perhaps its most "super" quality is being super low in calories; one cup of raw spinach or ½ cup of cooked spinach contains just seven calories! Spinach is so versatile you can pair it with almost anything to fill up without bloating your waistline. Mix it in with everything from smoothies to pastas to add bulk without adding fat and calories.

### 3. Almonds

Toss them in your salad, sprinkle a few over your cereal or just grab a handful to snack on—however you eat them, almonds are a stomach-friendly snack. They're rich in monounsaturated fats, the good kind of fats that can actually help with weight loss. One study followed two groups of people who were trying to lose weight. The two groups followed the same diet and exercise routine, except one group ate 300 calories worth of almonds per day. In the end, the almond group experienced 7% more weight loss than the non-almond group. Reach for this healthy nut when you're craving a salty snack.

### 4. Salmon

Salmon is one of the best proteins you can eat if you're looking to slim your midsection. A three-ounce salmon filet has just 155 calories and no carbs! It's a great source of lean protein, which helps you to feel full while maintaining muscle mass, without all the unhealthy fat found in foods like red meat. Finally, salmon contains the all-important omega-3 fatty acids, which are not naturally produced by our bodies.

## **5. Coffee**

We all know coffee contains caffeine, and it turns out it may do more than just perk you up in the morning. Research has shown that caffeine increases our metabolic rate by anywhere from 3 to 13%, depending on the amount consumed and the individual's response to caffeine. For best results, limit your caffeine intake to no more than four cups of coffee per day to avoid the jitters and other unwanted side effects.

## **6. Celery**

Celery is what's known as a negative calorie food, which means you burn more calories while eating it than you receive from the food itself. Sounds like a dream come true, right? That's because celery is mainly made up of water and fiber, two great diet components for maintaining a flat stomach. Dip it in hummus or smear some almond butter on top of celery for a healthy midday snack.

## **7. Berries**

Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries: take your pick and get your berry on! Berries are some of the most beneficial foods for our waistline, filled with fiber that makes us feel fuller longer than carbs or fat. An entire cup of any of these berries has less than 85 calories, so enjoy mixing them in with Greek yogurt, topping them on oatmeal or cereal, or throwing them into a summer salad.

## **8. Eggs**

Some say eggs are nature's most perfect food. Just one medium size egg contains six grams of protein but only about 70 calories. Studies have found that eating eggs increases our metabolic rate by between 20 to 35% for several hours after eating. This means our metabolism revs up and burns more calories! The great thing about eggs is that they're incredibly versatile; they can be prepared so many ways and paired with so many things that you can easily eat them for breakfast, lunch, dinner or all three.

## **9. Broccoli**

Broccoli might just be the most nutrient-rich of any vegetable. Its healthy punch comes from a key nutritional component: fiber. Broccoli is loaded with fiber which keeps us feeling full and keeps our blood sugar low. Soluble fiber like the kind found in broccoli also has the benefit of drawing harmful cholesterol out of the body. One cup of chopped raw broccoli contains nearly four grams of dietary fiber, which is about 15% of the American Heart Association's recommended daily dietary fiber intake.

## **10. Apples**

An apple a day keeps the doctor away... and the belly fat at bay! Apples are a diet-friendly snack that are easy to grab and eat on the go. They're about 85% water, which means they have a low calorie density—the number of calories per unit of weight in a food. One medium apple contains just 95 calories and 4.5 grams of healthy dietary fiber to fill you up without weighing you down.

## **11. Cinnamon**

It might sound crazy, but this seasonal spice you probably have in your pantry can actually help you lose weight. Studies suggest that cinnamaldehyde, the essential oil that gives cinnamon its flavor, may help us eat less and ward off weight gain. Scientists studying the effects of cinnamon in foods found that it prompted the body's metabolism to continue burning fat cells

instead putting them into storage (a.k.a. on our waistline). Cinnamon is also a great alternative to sugar that can be used to add flavor to everything from oatmeal to coffee.

## 12. Chewing Gum

Okay, okay, so chewing gum on its own won't help you lose weight. What it *will* do, however, is help ward off cravings and tide you over until mealtime to avoid reaching for an indulgent snack you'll later regret. Opt for sugar-free gum, which usually contains about five calories per piece.

## 13. Avocados

Though they're technically a fruit, nutritionally speaking avocados are much more of a fat—but don't let that stop you from incorporating them into your diet. Avocados are chock full of the healthiest kind of fat around, monounsaturated fat, which helps prevent weight distribution around the midsection. Avocados also help our bodies to absorb more disease-fighting compounds found in foods that are associated with improved weight and fat loss. And they're super versatile; they can be sliced and added as a topping to toast or salad, mashed and used as an alternative to mayonnaise, or even used in oil form to replace less healthy cooking oils like canola oil and vegetable oil.

## 14. Grapefruit

Widely known for its detoxifying properties, grapefruit can work wonders when it comes to slimming your midsection. It contains a compound called nootkatone, which may significantly reduce hunger and can stimulate metabolism to ramp up weight loss. This compound is so powerful, in fact, that pharmaceutical companies are working to incorporate it into weight loss supplements. Studies have shown that eating grapefruit may have a turbo-charging effect on the liver, helping it to burn more fat. Try eating half a grapefruit with Greek yogurt and honey for breakfast or blend it up in a smoothie for an on-the-go snack. *Note that grapefruit can interfere with the efficacy of some medications. Please check any medications you are taking carefully before adding grapefruit to your diet.*

## 15. Lots of Water

We saved this one for last because no matter what you eat, there's one more essential component to melting fat away from your waistline: plenty of water. First and foremost, water keeps us properly hydrated, which allows our bodies to burn fat as effectively as possible. It also ramps up your metabolism, increasing energy expenditure by 24–30% within 10 minutes of drinking a glass, and the effects last for a full hour. Finally, water is 100% calorie free and can be used to ward off hunger until your next meal.

# Foods To Avoid

While I don't advocate for making any foods strictly "off limits," there are some foods you'll want to avoid as much as possible if you're working to flatten and firm your midsection. These foods are filled with empty calories and bring almost no nutritional value—in fact, in many cases they can do us harm and contribute to conditions like diabetes and hypertension!

Eat these foods in moderation and whenever possible, swap them out with healthy alternatives, which I've included below.

### White Bread

Healthy alternatives: Ezekiel bread, rye bread, sourdough

**White Pasta**

Healthy alternatives: Veggie noodles made from spaghetti squash, zucchini, sweet potato or turnips

**White Rice (are you seeing a pattern here?)**

Healthy alternatives: Cauliflower rice, red or white quinoa, or try cutting your portion of rice in half and adding diced vegetables in

**White Sugar**

Healthy alternatives: Stevia, Xylitol, honey, palm sugar, coconut sugar, Blackstrap molasses, maple syrup, cinnamon

**Soda**

Healthy alternatives: water with lemon or lime, mineral water like Pellegrino, coffee, iced or hot tea

**Fruit Juice**

Healthy alternatives: Plain water or water sweetened with sliced fruit like orange or grapefruit

**Fried Foods**

Healthy alternatives: Grill, bake, or broil foods instead

**Candy**

Healthy alternatives: A small piece of 70% cacao dark chocolate, one piece of hard candy like Werther's caramels, a few chocolate-dipped strawberries, one medium glass of chocolate milk, raspberries, pears, peaches and other sweet fruits

**Potato Chips**

Healthy alternatives: macadamia nuts, pistachio nuts, any nut in a reasonable amount, baked sweet potato fries or chips, beet chips, light butter popcorn

Remember, your diet isn't "all or nothing!" Try to make good choices **most** of the time so you can splurge without guilt **once in a while**. If you mess up one day, don't give up! Get back on the wagon and try to do better the next.

In conjunction with a healthy diet, incorporate regular exercise into your daily life. Browse my library of free fitness videos including cardio, strength, stretching, pain relief and more at [www.fitnesswithcindy.com](http://www.fitnesswithcindy.com).