Where Does Fat Go When We Lose It?

By Robert Ferguson

Over the years, I've asked hundreds, maybe even thousands, of people a health-related question that most get wrong. What's even more surprising is that many professionals in the wellness space, including nurses, doctors, personal trainers, health coaches, and nutritionists, also fall short.

Here's the question: **"When you lose weight, where does the fat actually go?"**

I've heard all kinds of answers: "Your muscles burn it," "It melts," and even "It turns into muscle." Although these responses may be common, they are incorrect. In this article, we'll explore the actual science of fat loss, what fat is, how it leaves the body, and why even experts are often misinformed.

What Is Fat?

For many years, people believed that once you gain a fat cell, you have it for life. It was also commonly said that fat cells can only shrink, not disappear. While it is true that fat loss primarily happens when fat cells shrink, newer research has shown that fat cells do die off and are replaced over time, roughly every 8 to 10 years. So, while the number of fat cells in adulthood remains fairly stable, your body is constantly renewing them through a natural turnover process (Spalding et al., 2008). Fat is extra energy that your body stores (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 2023). Your body uses the food you eat for energy. If you eat more than your body needs, the leftover energy is stored as fat. Fat also helps protect your organs and keep you warm. Most of it is stored in areas such as your belly, thighs, and arms.

How Do We Lose Fat?

When your body needs energy, it retrieves fat from storage and breaks it down into smaller components, known as fatty acids and glycerol. Your body then uses those parts to make energy. As this happens, it also creates waste, including carbon dioxide and water, which are waste products that the body needs to eliminate (Meerman & Brown, 2014; WebMD, 2023).

The Role of Insulin in Fat Loss

Insulin is a hormone that helps control blood sugar levels. But it also plays a big role in fat storage. When insulin levels are high, a condition known as hyperinsulinemia, fat becomes trapped in your fat cells. Even if your body needs energy, it cannot access the fat (Fung, 2016).

But when insulin levels are low, fat can leave the fat cells. Your body breaks it down and uses it for energy. The leftover waste exits your body through several different pathways.

Where Does the Fat Go?

Fat doesn't just "melt away" or disappear. It turns into carbon dioxide and water. Here's how it leaves your body:

1. **Breathing (Carbon Dioxide):** About **84%** of the fat you lose exits through your lungs when you exhale (Meerman & Brown, 2014).
2. **Sweat, Urine, and Other Fluids:** The other **16%** leaves as water through sweat, pee, poop, tears, and spit.

So, every time you breathe out, sweat, or go to the bathroom, you're helping your body get rid of fat!

Once the fat is broken down, your body uses the energy for activities such as walking, thinking, and even sleeping. The waste, carbon dioxide, and water are what actually leave your body. Breathing plays a significant role in reducing fat. The carbon atoms from fat mix with oxygen, creating carbon dioxide, which you breathe out.

Why Many Professionals Get It Wrong

Many people, including health experts, believe that fat turns into muscle or simply burns up as energy. However, science indicates that most fat is eliminated from the body through the breath (Meerman & Brown, 2014). The rest leaves as water in different forms. Knowing how this works helps us better understand weight loss.

Fun Fact: You Exhale Fat!

If you lose **10 pounds of fat**, about **8.4 pounds** of it goes out through your lungs as carbon dioxide. The rest is eliminated through water in sweat, urine, and other bodily fluids.

Conclusion

Losing fat means your body is using its energy stores and removing waste. It's not magic, it's a science! Fat is turned into energy, carbon dioxide, and water. Most of it leaves when you breathe. The rest exits through sweat, pee, and other fluids. Understanding this can help you see weight loss in a whole new way.

What's Next?

If you want to learn more about how your body really works, and how to lose weight without giving up the foods you love, consider working with one of our certified Nutritionists, Health, and Weight Loss Coaches. They will coach you using the Diet Free Life methodology. This evidence-based and clinically proven approach helps individuals lose weight, improve their overall health, and potentially reduce or eliminate the need for certain medications.

Unlike most weight loss programs that focus on counting calories or eliminating carbs, this method teaches you how to eat intelligently by maintaining both your glucose and insulin levels within a

healthy range. Schedule a free consultation with me, **Robert Ferguson**, and either I or one of our trained coaches will personally guide you through the process. You don't have to diet again; we'll show you a smarter, lasting solution.

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About The Author

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