# Belly Fat Blast

## Challenge

# Challenge

## Introduction

In this 4 week challenge, we will be implementing tactics and uncovering evidence-based information to blast belly fat. But first, let's talk about belly fat!

As you get older, estrogen levels decrease. As estrogen levels drop, we experience change of body composition, and in this process, fat distribution begins to shift from the hips and thighs to the intra-abdominal cavity in the form of visceral - or belly - fat.

The menopause transition is also marked by rising inflammation levels, linked directly to declining estrogen levels. This inflammation also greatly contributes to joint and muscular pain, brain fog and this new belly fat deposition.

Studies have shown that increased belly fat raises the risk of heart disease, diabetes, dementia, breast cancer and perhaps even early sudden death. So while this 28-day challenge might have you feeling slimmer and trimmer, the real success will be the internal health you gain!

# Guidelines

Following are the 5 key areas we will focus on during the Belly Fat Blast Challenge.

- ◯ **Fiber**: Consume more than 25 grams of fiber per day.
- ◯ **Added Sugar**: Consume less than 25 grams of added sugar per day. This doesn't include natural sugars found in fruit, vegetables and dairy. Added sugars can be found on nutritional labels under Carbohydrates.
- ◯ **Exercise**: Complete 30-45 minutes of cardio in your fat burning heart rate zone for at least 150 minutes per week. Use the heart rate chart to find your fat burning zones.
- ◯ **Stress**: Actively lower cortisol through stress reduction techniques (ex: journaling, prayer, breathing, Tai Chi, restorative yoga, meditation, sleep hygiene).
- ◯ **Alcohol**: Refrain from alcohol consumption during this challenge.

# Focus 1:
## *Fiber*

Fiber is a prebiotic, which means it nourishes the health-promoting microbes in your digestive tract, creating a healthy environment where microbes can thrive. By strengthening the good microbes in your body, fiber helps prevent harmful microbes from taking over and disrupting your body's natural systems.

There are two types of fiber that you need to ensure you are consuming each day!

Soluble Fiber - meaning it dissolves in water - can aid in digestion, control blood sugar and cholesterol while protecting the insides of our arteries. Some examples of foods with soluble fiber are oat bran, dried beans and peas, nuts, barley, flaxseed, oranges, apples and carrots. It also works to keep you fuller, longer.

Insoluble Fiber - meaning it does not dissolve in water - is primarily found in whole grains such as brown rice and whole wheat, green beans, leafy greens, the skins of root vegetables, seeds and nuts. It helps keep food moving along, getting rid of waste and toxins. In doing so, it promotes bowel health and regularity while supporting insulin sensitivity, which may also help reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

If you're having trouble reaching your fiber goal of at least 25 grams per day through nutrition alone, you may want to consider supplementing with ***The Galveston Diet Fiber GDX*** which contains both types of fiber.

# Fiber *Facts*

- Fiber helps you lose weight because it displaces other less satisfying calories.
- More fiber-rich foods means lower insulin levels and slow, easy digestion.
- When fiber reaches the halfway point inside your gut, between the small and large intestines, it slows down the digestive process and sends your body a signal that it's full.
- Some of the best sources of fiber rich foods are berries, beans, whole grains and fruits and vegetables with their skin on.

For additional information read **The Power of Fiber to Decrease Symptoms from Menopause**.

# Focus 2:
## *Added Sugar*

Americans are eating and drinking too many added sugars, which can contribute to health problems such as weight gain and obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, fatty liver disease and an accelerated cognitive decline. The American Heart Association recommends that women consume no more than 25 grams of added sugar (sugars added in cooking and processing) per day.

Added sugars have many different names and include agave, brown sugar, cane juice, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit nectars, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, maple syrup, molasses, raw sugar, and sucrose. These substances contribute calories to your diet, without contributing any essential nutrients.

Remember that sugar is sugar, regardless of the source, so keep that in mind when you're adding honey, agave, maple syrup or other sweeteners to the dishes you prepare.

# Added Sugar *Facts*

- Reducing sugar consumption becomes easier as you begin to focus on eating whole, unprocessed foods, and swap out sodas and energy drinks for water or unsweetened iced tea or seltzers.
- Added sugars are listed under Carbohydrates on the nutritional labels of all packaged products.
- Bottled condiments such as salad dressings, barbecue sauces, ketchup and jarred marinara sauces, along with foods like flavored yogurts, often contain large amounts of added sugars.
- Keep an eye out for products labeled "low fat" or "no fat", as the fat that was removed has likely been replaced with sugar to improve the taste!
- The medical community is now discovering that cholesterol levels are less linked to cholesterol intake, and more linked to sugar intake!! Check **this article** out!

For more information, read my **Top 6 Reasons to Eliminate Added Sugars in Menopause.**

# Focus 3: *Exercise*

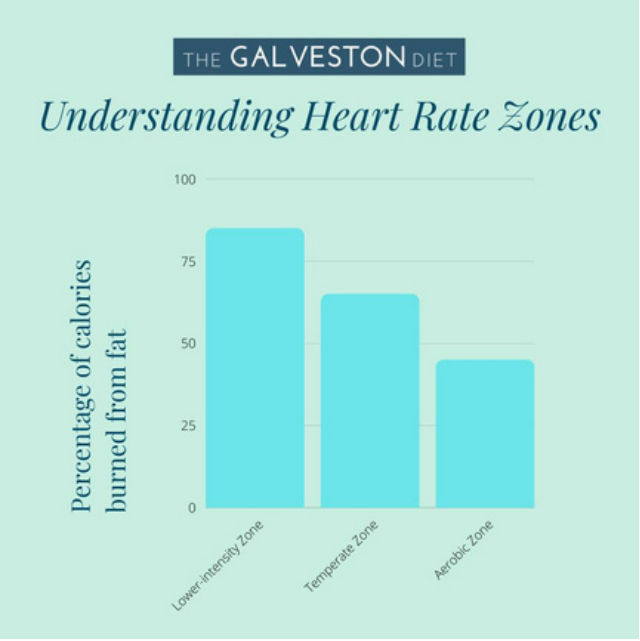
Our goal for this challenge is to complete 30-45 minutes of cardio - at least 150 minutes per week - in your fat burning heart rate zone (commonly referred to as Zone 2).

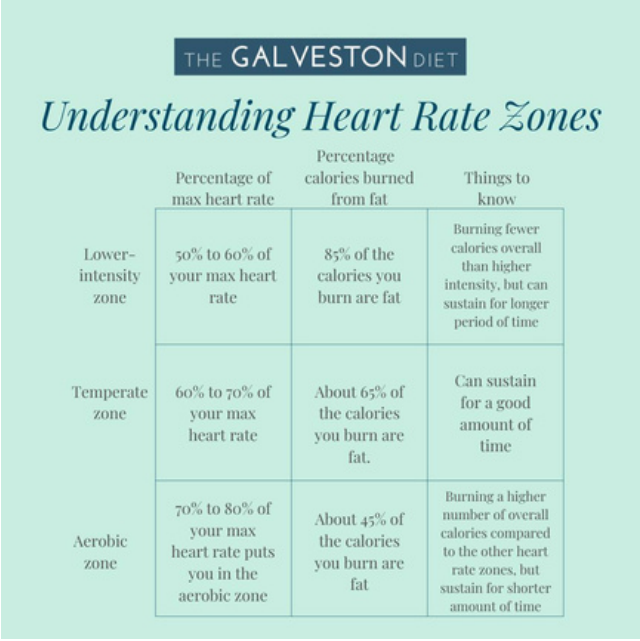
Zone 2 is steady-state aerobic training and is perhaps the most under-appreciated form of exercise. It is low impact and requires a consistent pace at 60-70% of your maximum heart rate. If sustained for 30-45 minutes, it is more effective at fat loss than most other exercises because at this pace of aerobic endurance, the body taps into fat as its fuel source.

If you have been completely sedentary, for the next four weeks, start small, and focus on walking for 5-10 minutes a day. If you tend to workout in high intensity workouts regularly, then use this challenge to try to do workouts that put you in the fat burning zone.

# Exercise *Facts*

- Heart rate zones are a percentage of your maximum heart rate (heartbeats per minute). Find your Zone 2 on the following page.
- Exercise too close to your maximum HR (Mhr) and your heart and body will struggle to keep up with the demands.
- As you'll see in these charts below, the closer to your max heart rate you get, the less fat you burn.




| | Percentage of max heart rate | Percentage calories burned from fat | Things to know |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lower-intensity zone | 50% to 60% of your max heart rate | 85% of the calories you burn are fat | Burning fewer calories overall than higher intensity, but can sustain for longer period of time |
| Temperate zone | 60% to 70% of your max heart rate | About 65% of the calories you burn are fat. | Can sustain for a good amount of time |
| Aerobic zone | 70% to 80% of your max heart rate puts you in the aerobic zone | About 45% of the calories you burn are fat | Burning a higher number of overall calories compared to the other heart rate zones, but sustain for shorter amount of time |

Want to learn more? Read my article on the **Benefits of Physical Activity in Menopause**.

# Heart Rate *Zones*

Use this reference chart to stay within your fat burning heart rate zone!

| Age | Max HR | Fat Burn Low Zone | Fat Burn High Zone |
|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 200 | 120 | 140 |
| 25 | 195 | 117 | 136.5 |
| 30 | 190 | 114 | 133 |
| 35 | 185 | 111 | 129.5 |
| 40 | 180 | 108 | 126 |
| 45 | 175 | 105 | 122.5 |
| 50 | 170 | 102 | 119 |
| 55 | 165 | 99 | 115.5 |
| 60 | 160 | 96 | 112 |
| 65 | 155 | 93 | 108.5 |
| 70 | 150 | 90 | 105 |
| 75 | 145 | 87 | 101.5 |
| 80 | 140 | 84 | 98 |
| 85 | 135 | 81 | 94.5 |

# Focus 4: *Stress Reduction*

Mood changes are connected to the brain chemistry adaptations during the menopause transition. Anxiety, frustration, anger, sadness and irritation, are related to the changes in brain receptors, the estrogen brain metabolism, and changes in the mood center, known as our amygdala.

Chronic stress contributes to inflammation through elevated cortisol levels. Finding new tools and developing new skills to help you manage your stress levels can help to improve your overall health.

What might have worked in your 20-30s might not fully support the life transitions that come with menopause ages and stages. Use meditation, yoga, guided imagery, journaling, exercise, or other methods to manage stress throughout the day.

Consider trying any of the following activities.

- Deep breathing
- Listening to calming sounds or music
- Gentle stretching
- Prayer or meditation
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Practicing good sleep hygiene
- Taking a walk
- Journaling

If you really struggle with implementing stress reducing strategies, focus on simpler activities such as breathing, listening to calming sounds or music or do some gentle stretching. Just do SOMETHING each day, 7 days a week!

# Stress Reduction *Facts*

- Your body produces two hormones when under stress: cortisol and adrenaline, often referred to as our 'fight, flight or freeze' hormones.
- Chronic stress may cause increased blood pressure, headaches, gastric reflux, depression and anxiety.
- Over the long term, chronic stress can lead to an increased risk for heart disease.
- Chronic stress may affect your immune system, making you more susceptible to illness, infections, and even some forms of cancer.
- Stress affects our health and our relationships, work performance, general sense of well-being, and quality of life.

Bring moments of joy, peace, and calm to your day by incorporating small walks, fresh air, journaling, using a meditation app, or sessions with a counselor or therapist.

Reducing stress shouldn't CAUSE you stress! Recognize that 5 minutes here and there throughout the day "counts".

# Focus 5: *Alcohol*

While wine (especially red wine) has been touted for providing some health benefits, too much of a good thing is in fact, not so great. Overconsumption may lead to many consequences that greatly outweigh any potential benefits.

If weight loss is your goal, cutting down on alcohol consumption can help a great deal. Giving up just one glass of wine per week could save 7,000 calories over the course of a year!

Be careful not to replace your glass or wine or cocktails with sugary, high calorie drinks, which are a source of extra - and empty - calories!

Ultimately, consuming alcohol can have implications for your long-term health, including the risk of developing certain cancers, liver disease and osteoporosis.

# Alcohol *Facts*

- Drinking alcohol can trigger some menopause symptoms, especially hot flashes and night sweats.
- Drinking alcohol increases the risk of disturbed sleep, reducing the amount of time in the REM phase.
- Excess consumption can result in an increase in the number of trips to the bathroom in the middle of the night (again, disrupting sleep).
- Alcohol can create - or exasperate - mental health issues including anxiety and depression, which can already be a struggle in midlife.
- Moderate to high levels of alcohol consumption (from more than one drink per day) has been linked to the development of osteoporosis.

# Tracking *Calendar*

| DAY | > 25 GRAMS OF FIBER | < 25 GRAMS OF ADDED SUGAR | 30-45 MINUTES IN ZONE 2 | STRESS REDUCTION ACTIVITY | NO ALCOHOL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | |
| 21 | | | | | |
| 22 | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | |
| 25 | | | | | |
| 26 | | | | | |
| 27 | | | | | |
| 28 | | | | | |

# Bonus

## Developing a Health Mindset

The name of the course I created, and the book I wrote, is ***The Galveston Diet***, but the word "diet" is used only to describe a pattern of eating, *not* a means to achieve a certain number on the scale.

Shifting your mindset from one of a "diet" to one of a "health" mindset helps you focus on creating habits and daily choices to create the life that you want for yourself without feeling deprived or that this way of living is temporary.

Resist labeling foods as "good" or "bad". Telling ourselves that certain foods are "off limits" or "forbidden" often backfires, and creates feelings of guilt or shame if - or when - you choose to eat that "bad" food.

Making educated decisions about what foods you consume. Eat when you're hungry, stop eating when you are satisfied. Do it all with joy.

Along with this shift in mindset, you may realize your "non-scale benefits" begin to outweigh the scale benefits. You may experience more mental clarity and focus (ie. less brain fog), clearer skin, shinier hair, stronger nails, better mood, a reduction in hot flashes and night sweats, improved digestion and decrease in joint pain and stiffness.

Your initial interest in **The Galveston Diet** may have been to lose weight, but what will keep you following the Galveston Diet is how fantastic you feel!

# Don't Stop Now!

## This is just the beginning!

