Dear Alice,

Is it possible to lose all body fat? Should you eliminate all fat from your diet?

? Anonymous

**Answer**

Dear Anonymous,

In a word, no! Fat ? both on the body and in a person's diet ? gets an undeserved bad rap and is actually essential for our survival. Body fat is found in places you may not even think about when you're considering its role in your health. It's part of:

- Every cell membrane
- Some hormones and prostaglandins (hormone-like substances) which regulate many body functions
- Nerve sheaths (nerve coverings)

Body fat is categorized as either essential or storage fat; both types play a vital role in everyday functioning. Essential fat is found in bone marrow and lipid rich tissues throughout the body. Storage fat is located around internal organs and under the skin (subcutaneous). These two types of body fat play key roles in keeping the body healthy. For example:

- A layer of fat surrounds each organ (such as your heart, liver, kidneys, etc.), protecting and cushioning it against impact during sports or accidents,
- Fat helps maintain normal body temperature.
- Fat provides a supply of stored energy, which can sustain you if food is not available.
Dietary fat is the fat found in a variety of foods and is a concentrated source of energy for the body. It's dangerous to eliminate all fat from your diet. Certain fats, essential fatty acids, can only be obtained from foods. These are incorporated into regulators of specific body processes such as blood pressure and even help you maintain healthy skin. Dietary fats are also required to absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K. These nutrients are vital to your vision, bone formation and maintenance, blood protection and clotting, nerve development, and can act as a defense against oxidation. In addition to their health benefits, fats provide joy in eating. They carry flavors and aromas, and provide foods with pleasurable textures. Fats also fill you up and help satisfy your appetite.

When it comes to fat, too much or too little on your body and in your diet is not recommended. The related Q&As can shed some more light on the facts about fat.

Alice!
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