

helen to the rescue

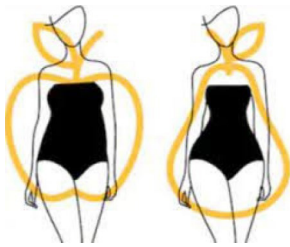
By **Helen Pufahl**, Resident Contributor

Women and the middle-age spread!

It was there in the back of my closet, that dress I wore to a party ten years ago. I was excited to wear it again; it didn't occur to me that it may not zip up! Oh no! I'm the same weight I was ten years ago when I wore this dress! What happened? Has an increase in belly fat made it hard to zip up your jeans?

You're not alone, it's not something you did or an indication that you're letting yourself go! Women are more likely to gain excess belly weight — especially deep inside the belly — as they go through perimenopause and into menopause. Estrogen levels

drop, and body fat is redistributed from the hips, thighs, and buttocks to the abdomen.



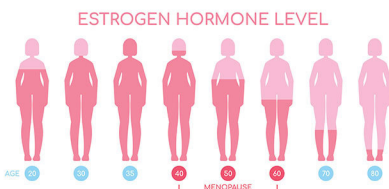
Belly fat is more than skin deep!

The trouble with belly fat is that it's not limited to the extra layer of padding located just below the skin (subcutaneous fat). It also includes

visceral fat — which lies deep inside your abdomen and surrounding your internal organs. This deep fat can lead to a multitude of health problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, and breathing problems. Visceral fat contains active cells that release hormones. These out-of-balance hormones can cause insulin levels to go up and thyroid levels to go down.

Trimming the fat

We've all seen the ubiquitous internet ads claiming to hold the secret to shrinking belly fat. It worries me that women who do right by themselves, keep up exercise habits, and have a good diet may feel defeated if their belly fat



doesn't budge. Keep in mind your fat may have a mind of its own! There's only one way to fight nature's plan for a thickening middle and its attendant risks ... you know where this is going!

Eat less, especially carbohydrates, fats, fatty proteins, and exercise more. Regular aerobic exercise; cardio is a great way to shed visceral fat. You can tone abdominal muscles, but just doing ab exercises won't get rid of belly fat. Proper diet and exercise will help you shed excess pounds and lower your total body fat.

Adding more muscle will also keep your metabolic rate perky! And, if you're still feeling discouraged by your changing body, despite a good diet and exercise program, I recommend a dose of self-compassion. "If my middle is resistant, I'm going to understand that may be part of the life stage I'm in."

I've been on a diet for a whole week, and all I lost was seven days!



Helen Pufahl MS, NASM-CPT

Helen's love of fitness began at an early age. She practiced dance, gymnastics as well as track and field. She's an Exercise Physiologist with 35 years of experience. She is also a certified personal trainer, corrective exercise specialist, nutrition consultant, and Senior fitness specialist. Helen is the owner of Unique Health & Fitness.

EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO MOVE IT *and* LOSE IT!

**Personal Training
Iyengar Yoga
Massage Therapy
Acupuncture
Kids Personal Training
Private Spin**



**75 New Street, Huntington Village
631-673-5600 | www.uniquehealthandfit.com**