

# Water retention and getting lean

I hear it all the time... "I do so much cardio, and my diet and training are so on point, yet I still have this layer of fat covering my abs! What's the matter with me?" Well... that layer of "muscle-masking mess" that you might assume to be fat, could in fact be primarily "subcutaneous fluid", otherwise known as "water weight".

The body has a natural mechanism for storing water and ions in the body, just as it does for storing excess calories as fat. Ions are basically charged particles which float around in your body, having various functions. You may have heard the term "electrolyte" before. An electrolyte is basically a molecule with a certain electric "charge" in your body, such as potassium (K+), or sodium (Na+), for example.

Take this test: See that skin covering your lower abdominal area? Give it a pinch, pull it, and let it go. If it shakes with a sort of quick "rippled" motion, you are probably carrying a lot of fluid which you were assuming to be fat.

A lot of bodybuilders get very lean, and achieve vascularity in areas such as their arms and legs, yet still cannot get their lower abdominal muscles to appear. This is usually due, not to fat, but to fluid and excess sodium ions being deposited in the lower abdominal region, thereby masking the well-sculpted muscle that lies underneath. This is why you hear a lot of people saying things such as "I'll never get this thick skin to go away"; when in fact they are misunderstanding a major concept that underlies achieving a truly striated and well-defined look: flushing subcutaneous fluid and excess sodium from underneath the skin.



"But how do I get rid of that excess fluid?" you might ask. I'm going to outline the steps I follow when I have a little extra fluid to lose, so that you also can get rid of that stubborn water weight, and achieve the thin skin, and truly striated look of competitive bodybuilders and fitness models. Before you start to drop water weight though, it is wise to know if you are lean enough to even begin considering it.

If you are above 7 or 8% body fat and you're looking to get extremely lean from water loss, it probably won't happen. But if you can already pretty much see your abdominal muscles, but have thick skin overlying them, and want to thin it out a bit, then these steps should be what you need to achieve the look you desire. Stick with it for a prolonged period of time, and give it a dedicated try. Nothing works overnight.

## 1) Drink More Water.

That's right. You've probably heard this one before, and it is definitely true. This is the most important advice I can give, and I cannot stress its importance. Besides flushing out your kidneys and entire digestive system, hydrating your body, and brain, thereby allowing your metabolism to function more effectively, and just making for a nicer skin tone and appearance, drinking more water causes you to release more water through excretion, thereby dropping "water retention".

Aim for 1-2 gallons of water a day, but be sure to take a complete multi-vitamin, as drinking a lot of water causes you to excrete many ions which may result in a deficiency of certain vitamins.

## 2) Sweat, Sweat, Sweat...

Sweating is a way of "evaporative cooling", a mechanism by which the body regulates its temperature. If you are sweating, it means your metabolism is probably in high gear, since a higher metabolism equals a higher resting body temperature for the most part. Also, water retention is not simply "water", but sodium ions trapped underneath the skin. This is why your sweat tastes salty. A trick I use is to sit in the sauna, and keep drinking water. In the beginning, your sweat will taste salty, telling you that you are retaining sodium.

After a while, your sweat will begin to taste like water. This tells you that you have sweat most of the sodium out that was being retained underneath your skin, which means you have lost a good portion of muscle-masking fluid. Once again, whenever sitting in a sauna, be sure to have water handy, and be sure to supplement with a vitamin, as you sweat out many of your essential vitamins.

## 3) Pose, Pose, Pose...

A lot of people don't like to sit in front of the mirror and squeeze their muscles, but I have found this to be one of the most important factors in truly achieving great detail deep within the muscle bellies. Besides causing you to sweat out subcutaneous fluid, posing allows you to gain greater control of your muscles. Try to flex just your posterior deltoid muscle, or just one muscle of your quadriceps.

It is a good method of practice for establishing a mind-muscle connection which will both enhance definition while posing, and allow you to better control your muscles during resistance training. The more you pose, and keep your sodium and water level low, the more cuts you will begin to see in your muscles over time, providing that your diet is on point as well.

## 4) Don't Gorge On The Salt!

That's correct, eating foods such as french fries, potato chips, and various other foods loaded with unnecessary amounts of sodium, will cause you to retain water. The body only needs between 2000-2500mg of sodium a day to complete its metabolic functions.

If you go way over that mark, you are indulging in a mineral which the American population has been using in excess for quite some time now, creating many health problems and concerns. Keep your sodium moderate, and replace excess salt with spices such as garlic, ginger, fresh vegetables, black pepper, chives, cilantro, **Ms. Dash**, hot sauce, or anything else your taste buds desire.



## 5) Fiber, Fiber, Fiber...

Most Americans, and even more surprisingly, most "bodybuilders", do not consume adequate amounts of fiber in their diet. Similar to water, which cleanses the urinary tract and kidneys, fiber cleanses the colon/intestinal tract, keeping things moving smoothly, and more, aiding in the removal of excess fluid. In the morning, if I find that I need to drop some fluid, I will take 2 tablespoons of Psyllium Husk Orange Natural Colon Cleanser, mixed with water.

During my meals, I include fresh vegetables, and I steam the ones I cook very lightly or eat them raw with Balsamic Vinegar and/or garlic powder to make sure I don't boil out all of their nutrients. I also include fresh fruits such as blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries, all of which have plenty of fiber and many antioxidants` which help prevent against cancer and other ailments. When in doubt, berries are a great way to go.

## 6) Dandelion Root & Black Coffee Or Tea!

I have found the natural herb dandelion root to be a good naturally occurring diuretic, when taken in conjunction with the previous methods I have outlined. Always make sure to drink PLENTY of water and watch your sodium levels, otherwise you will be wasting your time. Coffee and tea are naturally occurring diuretics as well, although some people might not like the jittery feeling caused by stimulants.

## 7) Tan, Tan, Tan...

Tanning helps to tighten up the skin, and drop excess fluid through sweating as well. Always use some sort of SPF level, and make sure to consume antioxidants (such as berries), on a frequent basis to fight off free radicals which can be carcinogenic (cancer causing).

**Be sure to tan sensibly and gradually and never burn your skin. Over exposure to the sun that causes sunburns can cause cancer, so be smart.**