

When the scales don't move does it really mean that I won't lose any fat at all?

If body weight has not been lost, it doesn't necessarily mean you're NOT losing fat.

We receive many emails from people explaining that they're exercising more and reducing calories but the weighing scales don't seem to move for weeks. Or even some suggest they're getting fatter! There are a few reasons as to why this can occur, so let us explain a few of these in detail to try and answer this common question.

1. As most people are aware when we first start any new exercise the muscles involved adapt over the first few weeks by becoming stronger, a strength increase often leads to a gain in muscle mass. It's possible to gain 2-3 pounds of lean weight within a few weeks without noticing any change in musculature because the layer of excess fat will cover small overall muscle gains. These new gains in lean mass **can also mask any loss in body fat**, especially if you're only losing fat at a rate of 1-2 pounds per week. It's also possible that initial muscle gains could overtake any fat loss and **the dieter sees the scales actually go up!**

This is one reason **why using weighing scales is NOT the best method** to test fat loss results; it may be more accurate to check fat percentage by using fat monitors.

Realistically, the dieter should stick with their workout schedule as any initial lean muscle gains will slow once the muscles are strong enough to cope with this new type of exercise. At this point, **fat loss should begin to speed up because** greater lean mass will increase the metabolism and enable the fat stores to reduce. Exercising to lose weight is king, so stick with a regular exercise plan!

2. Another change is an increase in blood volume. Hard working muscles need a greater supply of oxygen in order to maintain the work rate. Our body adapts by increasing the blood volume so a greater amount of oxygenated blood can be delivered to exercising muscles.

3. Regular exercise increases carbohydrate storage capacity in the muscles (Glycogen). This enables the muscles to hold more energy for the next time you perform the exercise. Greater glycogen stores within the muscles causes the body to draw in more water to aid the storage; again this process will add some additional weight, although exactly how much depends on the type of exercise (anaerobic exercise tends to store greater Glycogen levels), and the present diet of the individual, specifically the carbohydrate intake. In theory however, if one is following a low calorie diet, the carbohydrate intake may not be high enough to produce a large glycogen storage.

4. Another consideration if the scales don't seem to be moving is you could be gaining back fluids lost from the first stages of your weight loss. When we lose weight it is inevitable that we will also lose some fluid – caused by loss of muscle glycogen, protein / muscle loss or general fluid loss through increased sweating. A gradual replacement of these previously lost fluids could again be masking any further losses in body fat stores.

Fat is actually a relatively light, but dense, source of energy. A fat loss of one pound is a huge loss of energy, as much as 3500 calories. For this reason, losing fat will often take longer than the adaptations which occur to new exercise, so any exercise regime should be thought of as long term in order of months, NOT weeks. If the scales don't seem to be moving, DO NOT worry or start to believe that you're wasting your time. Make sure you obtain the right exercise plan for your body shape, then stick with it on a regular basis. Every few weeks adjust your dietary intake, and/or tweak the exercise plan to burn more calories.

Good Luck!