

# Balance365 Episode 96 Transcript

ANNIE BREES

Welcome to balance 365 life radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight, and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees along with co-founder Jennifer Campbell. Together we have a team of personal trainers and nutritionists who coach thousands of women daily and are on a mission to help women feel happy, healthy, and confident in their bodies on their own terms. Join us here every week as we discuss hot topics pertaining to our physical, mental and emotional well being with amazing guests. Enjoy.

ANNIE

Hello my friends, welcome to Balance365 Life Radio. This is your host Annie Brees and I am flying solo today which is quite a contrast from what this podcast normally is because normally I get to come on here and talk with my friends and now it's just me by myself. So it might get a little awkward. I don't know, maybe it'll be great. I'm open to it all. Okay, so what I want to talk to you is a topic that comes up quite often not so much necessarily in our community, but just in my day to day conversations with people really outside of our community. And they're always asking about, "How do I get six pack abs?" Or "I want six pack abs" or "I want to be able to see my abs" or "Can I can I get rid of the fat just from my midsection?" And there's a lot of possible answers and avenues and responses I could give that isn't always necessary for just a brief conversation in passing, or over dinner or drinks, or in a group of people. So I want to dive a little bit more into the topic because matters of the midsection do come up quite often, especially in women our age, and I get it, because the core goes through quite a transition during pregnancy and beyond. And if you Google, you don't need to do it because I've already done it, but if you Google how to reduce belly fat, the results will suggest everything from diet tricks to expensive wraps, secret core exercises, detox teas promising to help you trim your waistline practically overnight. And unfortunately, the information available to women about belly fat leaves a lot to be desired. And I want to be clear that hard or soft, flat around, that all bellies are good bellies. And if and when and how you choose to address or not address your midsection is completely up to you. I'm not prescribing anything, I'm simply offering information. And if it's something that you feel compelled to investigate further before you swear off the carbs or hammer the treadmill or drop some serious cash on bogus products, it could be helpful to consider potential causes. And there are many reasons why an individual may have more or less belly fat and the causes might surprise you.

So, reason number one, genetics. Genetics largely determine our hair color or shoe size or height, even where we're likely to store fat. In fact, a study conducted in the 1990s on twins, it was one of the first to present that general body fat, shape and composition are strongly influenced by genetics. And since then specific genetic variants have been shown to affect females, fat storage patterns, in particular waist and hip circumference measurements. And that

makes sense. People's bodies are all uniquely different. Some of us have more fat on our thighs and our hips, some have thicker waists and some have fat in their arms and chest. There's not one body that's the same as the next and we have to accept whether we like it or not that our genetics determine where our fat is stored on our bodies.

Here's what you can do about it. If you want new genetics, you're gonna have to find new parents, right? That being said, even if your parents weren't built like Serena Williams or John Cena, you can make changes to your health and your body composition by addressing your overall health and wellness habits, which is exactly what we do inside of Balance365. Just keep in mind that we aren't all born with the ability to develop rippling six pack abs just like we aren't all born with the ability to become six feet tall. Even at my leanest and lightest weight, I never had six pack abs.

Okay, reason number two: diastasis recti. This is also known as abdominal muscle separation, and it's where the left and the right sides of the abdominal muscles are separated. This is commonly seen, but not only seen, it's commonly seen in pregnant and postpartum women, but it can also be found in children and adults. And the separation of your abdominals is completely normal, natural occurrence during pregnancy diastasis recti becomes an issue when health and function are compromised. And this could be during pregnancy or after pregnancy when the connective tissue remains stretched and lax months after delivery. Diastasis recti doesn't actually increase abdominal fat, but common complaints can include lower back pain, pelvic pain, incontinence issues, and women noting that they feel like they still quote unquote look pregnant months or years after delivery. There are some things you can do about it. A quick self assessment can help you determine if you have diastasis recti. And if in doubt, or you want a second opinion, we strongly recommend that you find a women's health or pelvic floor physical therapist to help you with this. We do have some links on our website that we can share in the show notes to help you locate one in your area if you need.

Reason number three: stress. Stress increases the production of cortisol. Cortisol is known as the stress hormone, it helps our bodies use glucose, sugar, fat and manage stress and it naturally rises and falls throughout the day, peaking in the morning and then dropping at night. Cortisol is designed to kick in to help us in the short term, fight or flight situations, but it can also become elevated with prolonged exposures to stress. Continually elevated levels of cortisol have been linked to an increase in belly fat. And if you're a mom, it's almost guaranteed that you have stress in your life. Hello, teeny babies, bake sales, potty training, tantrums, we've been there we get it. Additionally, cortisol can ramp hunger and cravings and studies have concluded that experiencing physical and emotional stress increases consumption of foods high in fat, sugar, or both. And I don't know about you but when I'm stressed to the max, my hand is in a chip bag or a cookie jar. It's not in the carrot bag, right? Following ingestion, though, those same foods can actually temporarily negate stress promoting a more calming state and the body, so it makes sense to you if you find yourself scouring the cupboard for that six month old Halloween

candy when you're on the verge of losing your you know what, there really is some truth behind "comfort foods."

Here's what you can do about it. How we react to stress is largely determined by genetics and previous life experiences. But situations like caring for children and tense work environments, relationships, financial strain can all contribute to elevated stress levels. Stress management is an important aspect of our health for a variety of reasons, but as it pertains to belly fat, reducing stress may also help you shrink your waistline or by preventing the accumulation of belly fat. Sleep, meditation, therapy, exercise, massage, binge watching Orange s the New Black on occasion, bubble baths are all of our top picks. But finding a method that works for you is really important.

Reason number four: poor posture and breath. Posture and breath can impact the appearance of our stomach and it's not uncommon for women to habitually suck in their stomachs in an effort to appear thinner. I know I am guilty of this in the past for sure. And this can have an adverse effect on your lower abdominals and internal pressure system, therefore changing the appearance of our belly. So while it doesn't actually contribute to belly fat, it can affect the appearance of our bellies, and corrections to our posture and breath can be made in just a few short minutes. But turning those corrections into habits can take some practice. And this can also be really helpful to see a pelvic floor physical therapist as well on reconnecting your core and breath and posture. Bonus points, you're going to get permission and encouragement to not suck in ever again.

Reason number five: body composition, which is almost always the reason that people think they have abdominal fat. It just must be a matter of body composition. But as I've clearly covered, it can be a lot of things in addition to or instead of body composition. But body composition, what I mean by that, just I'm referring to the percentage of fat, bone, water and muscle in our bodies. Higher amounts of fat may result in higher waist circumference, especially when combined with a genetic predisposition to store fat in your abdominal area as I already discussed, versus hips, thighs, or your butt. Here's what you can do about it. Attempts to change your body composition is typically as I mentioned, the first place many women start when they want to reduce their waistline, but changing body composition is generally done so by creating a caloric deficit through diet and or exercise, and while changes in body composition has the potential to make a big impact they must also be accompanied by a change of day to day habits if you want those changes to stick, again something we really dive into in Balance365. And assuming that this is something you want to tackle, that you do, in fact, want to tackle changes to your body composition, you're most likely to succeed by addressing small sustainable changes to your behavior while keeping in mind where individuals lose fat first is genetically driven. Have I said that enough times? I want to be clear where you lose fat first is genetically driven. So swapping in veggies for chips and strength training a few times a week may not be an impressive as an overnight haul but studies have shown the fewer habits you try

to change at once the more likely you are to succeed, so slow and steady wins this body composition race.

Okay, I do want to talk about some possible solutions that are presented on the market, and hopefully just help you save your time and money because I've tried all of them. First of all, restrictive diets. The truth is restriction can lead to weight loss. But unless you're planning on spending the rest of your life without whatever said in food or drink you're restricting, it's almost always guaranteed that once you reintroduce that food or drink, the weight will come back. It's a temporary solution, it's a band aid at best. Additionally, research has shown that assigning more values to food as being good or bad, a concept we've talked about a number of times on this podcast, ie ice cream is bad, and the restriction of bad foods can result in binge eating all of those foods as well as an increase in preoccupation with food. It's like when my parents told me not to date the bad boy in school who has now become famous on this podcast. [Laughs] His name was Alex. The minute they told me "Do not date Alex," that's all I wanted to do. So bottom line, food deprivation, restrictive diet isn't good for mental, emotional or physical health. Ditch the restrictive diets, work on your habits instead.

Another solution that isn't likely to work are a million crunches and planks. Proper core training does have benefits. But unfortunately, the idea of spot reduction or the ability to lose fat in targeted areas through exercise is a total myth. In other words, all the crunches, the sit ups, the planks in the world won't melt fat from your stomach unless it's also paired with a caloric deficit. As far as your core goes, including a variety of core stability and strength core movements, read not just crunches, into your exercise routine can be a smart choice. And we do have full body workouts on our Instagram and YouTube if you're curious about those.

Another solution that you can just save your money on is waist trainers. Waist trainers made popular by Kim Kardashian claim to "tone and flatten your stomach" by creating compression in your core to stimulate thermal activity burning more calories. Sadly, the only thing these shrink is your wallet as there is no scientific backing that these work. They may temporarily reduce your circumference while they're being worn and a little bit afterwards. Once you remove them, inevitably your waist will return to its original state. These aren't just harmless garments like most shapewear, though. Waist trainers can actually have adverse effects as it pertains to postpartum women. The intense compression they produce can increase intra abdominal pressure on the diaphragm and the pelvic floor as well as restrict core muscles from functioning properly. So your best bet is just a hard pass on these.

Another item you can pass on is wraps, whether at home or the spa. The idea of spending 30 minutes applying luxurious lotions and lathering yourself up in Saran-like material sounds kind of appealing on some days. Anything for a few moments alone right? But the downside of these so-called slimming wraps are that they are only temporary results. The scale may dip for a few

hours due to water loss and your skin may appear firmer thanks to various ingredients in the products, but similar to using the sauna, the results are bound to bounce back in just a few hours or a day or two. Another solution you can pass on is detox and skinny teas. Detox and skinny teas run rampant on the internet, on Instagram and thankfully they've started beginning limitations of what they can promote because they're harmful. But assuming your liver and kidneys are functioning properly, you don't need a detox. Sure, medical detoxes are sometimes necessary in extreme drug, alcohol and poisonous substance related situations and should be administered in a hospital by medically trained staff. But this isn't one of those cases. Similarly, the effectiveness of skinny teas is also highly suspect as they often have strong laxative effects. You know what I'm saying? Right? You're going to spend a long time in the bathroom after these. After reviewing various studies on the effectiveness of detox diets, the Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics concluded that, and I quote, "There is very little clinical evidence to support the use of these diets."

So all of the above considered, and regardless of what your belly looks like, if you find yourself preoccupied with the shape of your stomach, the key to making peace with your body likely lies in what's going on between your ears, not achieving a smaller waistline. And we encourage you to try spending a little less time focused on the things you don't like and more time on what you do like and you might just be surprised with those results.

This was a fun episode solo, it wasn't quite as awkward as I anticipated. So maybe we'll do more. I would love to hear your thoughts. If you're in our free Facebook group leave us a comment about this podcast episode or review on iTunes. Thanks so much for joining me today. We'll talk soon.

#### OUTRO

This episode is brought to you by the Balance365 program. If you're ready to say goodbye to quick fixes and false promises and yes to building healthy habits and a life you're 100% in love with, then check out [balance365.co](http://balance365.co) to learn more.