

Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

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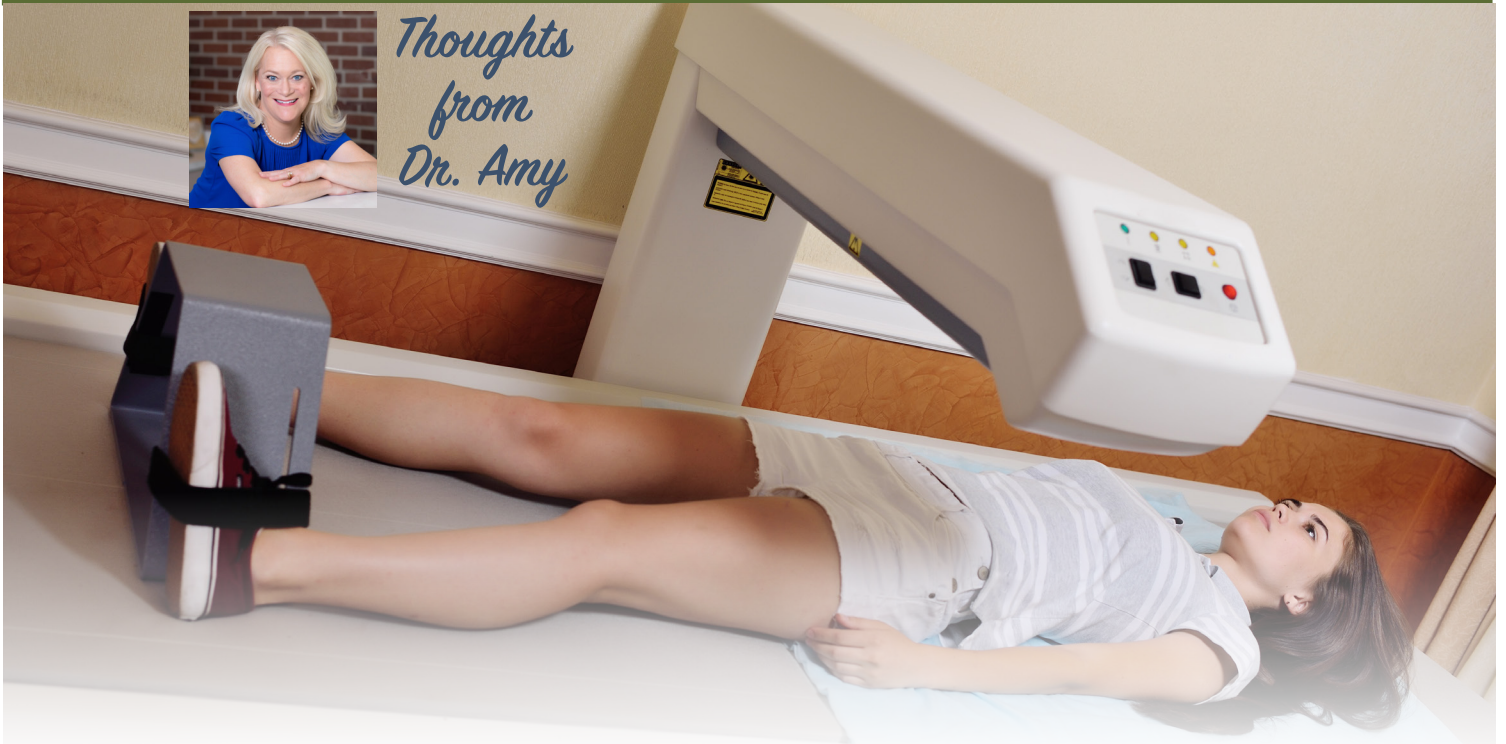


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The Power of Body Composition Scans: Personalizing Your Path to Optimal Health

In the realm of health and fitness, the journey to optimal well-being is marked by a multitude of factors beyond the “overall weight” number on the scale. Enter body composition scans — a tool that offers a deeper understanding of our bodies’ composition, including vital measurements like visceral fat and lean muscle mass. In this article, we’ll explore the significance of these metrics and how they can be leveraged to tailor personalized diet and exercise strategies.

The Importance of Body Composition

When it comes to assessing health, traditional methods such as stepping on a scale only scratch the surface. Body composition, on the other hand, provides a more nuanced picture by breaking down our bodies into various components like fat, muscle, water and bone mass. Among these com-

ponents, two stand out as particularly crucial: visceral fat and lean muscle mass. Most “in-office” and “at-home” composition scales work via bioimpedance, which is not as accurate as the full-body imaging scanners.

Visceral Fat: The Hidden Threat

Visceral fat, unlike subcutaneous

fat found just beneath the skin, lurks deep within the abdominal cavity, surrounding vital organs such as the liver, pancreas, and intestines. Its presence poses a significant health risk, as excess visceral fat has been linked to a higher risk of chronic diseases including heart disease, fatty liver disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Even individuals with a normal body weight can have dan

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gerously high levels of visceral fat, making it a stealthy yet formidable adversary to health.

Lean Muscle Mass: The Metabolic Engine

In contrast to visceral fat, lean muscle mass plays a pivotal role in supporting metabolic health and physical function. Not only does it contribute to a toned physique, it also enhances strength, mobility, and overall vitality. From a metabolic standpoint, maintaining excellent levels of lean muscle mass improves blood-sugar regulation and insulin resistance. Maintaining or increasing lean muscle mass becomes increasingly important as we age, as it helps offset age-related muscle loss (sarcopenia), contributes to improved bone health and preserves independence and quality of life.

Personalizing Diet and Exercise Strategies

Armed with insights from body composition scans, individuals gain a deeper understanding of their unique physiological makeup, paving the way for personalized diet and exercise strategies tailored to their specific goals and needs.

Dietary Adjustments

For those grappling with excessive visceral fat, dietary modifications can be a game-changer. By prioritizing whole, nutrient-dense foods while minimizing sugar and refined carbohydrates, individuals can effectively reduce visceral fat accumulation and improve metabolic health. Incorporating plenty of fiber, healthy fats and lean proteins can also help promote satiety, stabilize blood sugar levels and support muscle growth and repair.

An Exercise Prescription

When it comes to exercise, a one-size-fits-all approach simply does not cut it. Body composition scans empower individuals to identify areas of strength and weakness, allowing for targeted exercise programming. Those aiming to shed visceral fat may benefit from a combination of high-intensity interval training (HIIT), strength

training and cardiovascular exercise, all of which have been shown to effectively reduce abdominal fat and improve metabolic markers.

On the flip side, individuals looking to build lean muscle mass may opt to tailor their workouts to prioritize resistance training that targets major muscle groups. Incorporating progressive overload — gradually increasing the intensity or resistance of exercises — can stimulate muscle growth and strength gains over time.

An Imaging Partner in the Inland Northwest

Inland Imaging, located here in Spokane, Wash., offers state-of-the-art body composition scans that provide comprehensive insights into visceral fat, lean muscle mass and more. These quick and non-invasive scans empower individuals to take proactive steps toward their highest health potential. These “full body”

dual x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scans are available at many imaging centers across the country. These scans utilize low-powered x-ray beams that accurately and precisely differentiate between bone mineral, lean mass and fat mass. These cost on average \$75-300, depending on location. Often, companies offer them in a set of three for a discounted rate so progress can be tracked.

In the pursuit of optimal health and wellness, understanding your body composition is yet another wonderful and motivating tool. By delving beyond the numbers on a scale and focusing on metrics like visceral fat and lean muscle mass, we can unlock the key to personalized diet and exercise strategies tailored to our unique needs. Take the first step towards gaining a better understanding of your own body's makeup by either scheduling your own body composition scan or asking your healthcare provider to order one for you!



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PROTEIN:

How much do you really need?

By Monika Jacobson, RDN // Director of Lifestyle Health

One of the most frequent questions I hear from patients is, “How much protein do I need?” Many people have heard conflicting and confusing recommendations related to protein needs. And the topic is extra “buzzy” right now in part due to recent news headlines stating excess protein is bad for heart health, popular documentaries hyper-focused on vegan diets, and nutrition “experts” proclaiming all sorts of answers to this question with varying levels of daily protein recommendations.

MY TAKE?

The answer to this question is highly individualized and cannot possibly be summed into a blanket number.

Let’s take a closer look at protein and why we need it. Dietary protein is a key macronutrient in the human diet. Protein helps us feel satiated (full), helps to repair and build muscle tissue and is important in cellular function throughout the body. Concentrated sources of protein can be

found in animal sources such as the muscle of an animal (chicken breast, salmon filet, steak and even eggs); in the milk of an animal (milk, yogurt, cheese); and in plant foods (beans, legumes, grains and even some vegetables).

Is animal or plant protein better? That’s an even bigger topic, but certainly eating less animal protein means less saturated fat which we know is good for LDL cholesterol levels.

Protein needs are highly individualized. Age, body size, physical activity and kidney function should all be considered when calculating someone’s unique protein goals. The body can only use a certain amount of protein at a time for muscle synthesis, so the rest is often just extra calories (this is where excessive protein may be less supportive of heart health). Most healthy adults need approximately 0.8-1.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. This translates to around 20-30 grams of protein per meal. (For example, a 4 oz. chicken breast has about 28 grams of protein.)

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• March & April Recipe •



Monika's favorite Green Smoothie

In conjunction with her essay on protein, Monika provided us with her recipe for a high-protein smoothie. It's a way to get some greens and protein all at once:

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large handful of spinach, kale or mixed smoothie greens
- ½ banana, frozen
- ½ cup frozen mango chunks
- 1 tablespoon almond butter
- ¼ cup collagen powder (20 grams protein!)
- ½ cup plain, low-fat kefir

DIRECTIONS:

1. Add all ingredients to blender
2. Blend and add water until desired consistency is reached!

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Someone with a goal of gaining lean muscle mass needs more than someone simply trying to maintain health and body composition. Can someone eat extra protein and gain more muscle? Yes, but this must be done in combination with higher calories overall and a weight training program.

Here are some examples of foods that are naturally low in saturated fat and high in protein (not an exhaustive list).

- 4 oz. turkey or chicken (28 grams)
- 4 oz. salmon or tuna (26 grams)
- 4 oz. lean beef (28 grams)
- ½ cup lentils (12 grams)
- 1 string cheese (6 grams)
- 3.5 oz. firm tofu (17 grams)
- ½ cup black beans (9 grams)
- ½ cup shelled edamame (9 grams)
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt (20 grams)

TEN TIPS TO INCREASE PROTEIN:

1. Use bone broth in soups, stir-fries or when cooking whole grains like quinoa or rice
2. Add Greek yogurt to smoothies or eat with berries and nuts
3. Sprinkle beans/shelled edamame on salads
4. Enjoy cottage cheese with some tomato slices or peaches
5. Try hummus or bean dip with veggies/crackers
6. Add a fried or poached egg to avocado toast
7. Add cooked lentils to a salad, soup or stir-fry
8. Add black beans to an egg scramble
9. Snack on smoked salmon with rice crackers or cucumber slices
10. Keep turkey, salmon or beef jerky on hand for a portable snack