

# ***MISSION ABDOMINALS***

***TOP SECRETS***

**TO SIX PACK ABS!**

***THE TRUTH ABOUT***

**DIET SCAMS &  
RIP OFFS!**

***CONFIDENTIAL***

**MUSCLE BUILDING  
MANEUVERS!**

***TOM VENUTO, CSCS, CPT***

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# Mission: Abdominals

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**David Grisaffi, the "Abs Guru," Interviews  
Tom Venuto, the "Fat Loss Guru"**

*This special report is an excerpt from Tom Venuto's ebook,  
The Fat Burn Files: 10 Revealing, Uncensored Interviews  
with the World's Most Honest Fitness Guru.*

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# ***MISSION: ABDOMINALS***

## ***David Grisaffi Interviews Tom Venuto***

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Tom, before we get started, I just want to say thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule for this interview.

**TOM VENUTO:** Always a pleasure, David.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Let's jump right in and talk about a very popular topic in today's fitness news—abdominal fat. Many products claim to reduce abdominal fat. A few years back there was Cortislim, and today we see new products on TV, like Relacore, that talk about reducing abdominal fat. Would you tell us your thoughts on this subject?

**TOM VENUTO:** There are all kinds of products claiming to reduce belly fat through all kinds of physiological mechanisms including controlling insulin, reducing appetite, increasing thermogenesis, and others. The two products you mentioned claim to reduce abdominal fat by suppressing the hormone cortisol.

No matter what the mechanism involved, I can't put it any softer than to say this whole concept of "take a pill to lose your belly" is the wrong approach and a great way to burn your money, get taken advantage of, and end up frustrated, discouraged, or even harming yourself. If pills really worked in the long term, they would have stood the test of time, but instead, there's a new miracle product every year. That's how the marketing machine works—they keep hooking you with the "next big thing."

People get bombarded with so much advertising that they're conditioned—or I guess brainwashed is a better word—to think that a pill is the answer. But if you look at the history of the diet pill market, it's been one bomb, one scam, and one fraud after another.

The products you mentioned are perfect examples. In 2004, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed lawsuits against the makers of Cortislim and Cortistress, charging them with making false and unsubstantiated claims that their products can cause weight loss.

The last news I heard, which was in late 2005, the defendants were paying \$4.5 million in damages to settle, and they were banned from making certain claims in their advertising and from misrepresenting the results of tests or scientific studies. They were also prohibited from using what the FTC called “deceptively formatted television and radio advertisements.”

What I want to point out about all this is that Cortislim is still for sale and so are about a dozen or more copycat products. These companies were not banned from *selling* their products, they were only banned from making certain *claims* about their products.

You’ll notice a lot of them will say something like this: “Cortisol has been scientifically linked to abdominal body fat. Stress causes cortisol release. Therefore, stress causes belly fat. Our product contains ingredients that have a calming effect and reduce stress.” Some of the ads do not necessarily close this loop by saying, “Therefore, taking our product shrinks belly fat,” that claim is simply implied as the next step in the chain of causation. Others are still making fraudulent claims; the FTC just hasn’t caught up with them yet.

One of the things that really bothers me about the advertising in one of the current crop of products is that their ad says, “Excess tummy flab is not your fault.” Oh really? Well whose fault is that belly of yours? Your husband’s? Your kids’? Your neighbors’? McDonalds? Krispy Kreme? Your parents’? Yeah, maybe it’s all genetics. A glandular problem? Yeah, it’s a glandular problem all right—your mouth gland is malfunctioning several times a day, eating too many calories and too much junk food.

Taking 100% responsibility for your body and your health is one of the most important concepts I teach. Most people are happy to take the praise and credit whenever they succeed or produce a positive result, but they won’t accept the blame when they fail or produce a negative result.

If you want a great body, you have to be able to say, “The shape I’m in right now is totally my doing; it’s a result of the choices I’ve made up to now, and that’s the great part. Because I make my own choices, I have control to make different choices today and in the future, and so I have the power to change.”

Not a lot of people are willing to say that. Instead they make excuses or blame it on something else like genetics or lifestyle factors that they perceive to be out of their control—such as stress—and stress is what these new products are hanging their hats on. Clever marketing hook too, because who doesn’t feel at least a little stressed in this day and age we live in?

With products like these, there is usually a thread of scientific truth woven into a fabric of lies, and that’s what makes it difficult for the average lay person to separate the two.

In this case, there’s a scientifically proven correlation between the stress hormone cortisol and intra-abdominal body fat. But that doesn’t mean taking a pill that suppresses cortisol will remove body fat that is already deposited. It takes a calorie deficit through proper diet and exercise to do that.

Pop all the pills you want and suppress cortisol all you want, but if you’re eating more than you’re burning, you’re going to keep gaining even more body fat. There are also plenty of people with high cortisol who are losing weight because they’re burning more calories than they eat.

To avoid legal or FTC issues, some companies are making it a point to emphasize the importance of nutrition and exercise in addition to taking their pill. This is a good thing, but on the other hand, it also complicates matters because, if you’re working out and dieting, then there’s no way to tell whether the weight loss you achieve is a result of the pill or the exercise and nutrition. Most likely, it’s 99% the exercise and nutrition, if not 100%, and between 0% and 1% the supplement.

Something else I find very deceptive is that some of these companies are making their herbal and vitamin product packaging look like pharmaceuticals. The bottles mimic drug packaging, the

label says “XYZ laboratories,” and the pills aren’t tablets, they’re two-color capsules that look like drugs.

There’s some serious advertising psychology going on here. Not only does this imply that the product is a drug or is as powerful as a drug, if only unconsciously in the consumer’s mind, it also gives greater perceived value. Some of these products are \$50, \$75, even \$100 or more a bottle for a 30-day supply. That’s an insane markup for a few vitamins, minerals, and herbs.

If you’re under a lot of stress, you don’t need a pill to suppress the cortisol produced by the stress, you need to reduce stress! That’s obvious to the point of “DUH,” but people always seem to want the magic pill, don’t they?

I’d recommend taking up a stress reduction program that could include meditation, time in nature, yoga, deep breathing exercises, vacation time, daily and weekly timeouts to decompress and relax, and high quality sleep. You also need to balance your training stress properly with the right amount of recovery.

My advice: Never waste your money on a pill that claims to reduce fat or belly fat. Exercise and proper diet are the way to go if you want permanent results. When you combine those with a proper balance of work and rest, training and recovery, stress and relaxation, then you have everything you need for great health and amazing abdominals.

By the way, I published a free report about cortisol, stress, and body fat, including almost three dozen research references. You can read it online or download it for free. The web address is:

[www.BurnTheFat.com/cortisol\\_stress\\_belly\\_fat\\_information.html](http://www.BurnTheFat.com/cortisol_stress_belly_fat_information.html)

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** What about hoodia gordonii? The ads say, “It’s the newest phenomenon and most exciting fat loss product available, as seen on *60 Minutes*,” and so on. What are your thoughts?

**TOM VENUTO:** I have never seen so much hype as this hoodia thing, but I guess that’s what *60 Minutes* and BBC prime time will do. Not to mention millions of spam emails. I usually don’t like to generalize because there are exceptions to almost every rule, but I’m going to

do it anyway and say once again that pills are a total waste of time and money.

If hoodia does anything, it's a quick fix. At the very best, if it contains what it says it contains, and does what it claims to do, it might suppress appetite so you eat less. That might be of value to some people some of the time, but I don't believe suppressing appetite is the right strategy to begin with. Suppress your appetite so you can starve yourself and slow down your metabolism and lose muscle? Great logic there. You need to feed your muscle, not starve it, and burn the fat with exercise.

It's also totally senseless to take pills that you are completely uneducated about. Many people are taking hoodia because of the hype, but they don't even have any idea what it is or what it's supposed to do.

Hoodia is a plant from Africa that has reputedly been used by the Kalahari bushmen to suppress appetite while they went on long hunting trips. In 1997 it was licensed to a British pharmaceutical company called Phytopharm. Then Phytopharm sold the rights to Pfizer, the maker of Viagra. Pfizer's intention was to develop a synthetic version and sell it as an obesity drug. Nothing came of it, and they sold the rights back to Phytopharm—that's interesting because it makes you wonder if Pfizer saw no potential in it.

Phytopharm did one in-house study with a small group of subjects, but so far *there is not one single independent study in a peer reviewed journal that proves hoodia is effective for helping with weight loss*. All this hype is based on anecdotal evidence and a couple of reporter's personal testimonials broadcast to millions of people.

There are a lot of experts—and I'm talking about educated and respected professionals—who say that controlling appetite with various compounds (drugs or natural supplements) is a completely acceptable and effective way to help people lose weight. That may be true if you're talking about temporary weight loss and if you're okay with using drugs, and a lot of people are. Personally, I think that's short term thinking, especially when you figure that you can control appetite just by eating properly and avoiding the types of

junk food and refined sugars that make your blood sugar go haywire.

I believe that if you're not thinking about long term permanent fat loss, then ultimately you're wasting your time. We don't have a problem with people losing weight. The problem is the inability to keep weight off. 95% of the people who lose weight gain it back within a year. That's because 95% of the people who lose weight are losing weight the wrong way—with pills, crash diets, and other quick fixes. The right way is burning the calories with exercise and supporting your workouts with good nutrition.

One last thing worth mentioning is that this *hoodia gordonii* plant is apparently quite rare, and there is a limited supply and a large demand. As a result there has been at least one case of a company selling phony hoodia, and I read one statistic that estimated that two-thirds of the hoodia on the market is phony. That's just one more reason not to bother.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Good information, Tom, thanks. Why don't we stay on this subject of hyped weight loss products. Another one of the new ones is the diet patch. What is your opinion of this product?

**TOM VENUTO:** The diet patch just makes me laugh even before I analyze the ingredients it supposedly delivers, because like a pill, a patch is not addressing causes, it's just another weak attempt at treating a symptom. What about fixing the cause—inactivity and poor diet—with exercise and good nutrition?

Usually when I say that, someone says back to me, “Yeah, Tom, I will diet and exercise while I'm using the patch,” and over and over again I will keep saying, not only do *none* of these approaches work without diet and exercise, if you ate right and exercised right, you wouldn't need them even if they did work and you could save your money! Spend it on better food and a gym membership or home gym equipment.

But let me play devil's advocate and let's go ahead and look objectively at the facts, assuming it's possible that there might be something valid here, because patches are a legitimate method to deliver drugs transdermally, which means through the skin.

Examples include scopolamine for motion sickness, the nicotine patch for smoking cessation, and the testosterone patch for low male hormone levels and the problems that come with that, and there are quite a few other drugs approved for transdermal drug delivery.

The over-the-counter diet patches of course are not delivering weight loss drugs, but simply claim to contain all kinds of over-the-counter ingredients including guarana, lecithin, L-carnitine, *sida cordifolia*, and others that claim to increase your metabolism or decrease your appetite.

You have two questions to consider here. First, are any of these ingredients scientifically proven to help you lose weight to begin with? Second, does the over-the-counter patch effectively deliver the ingredients through the skin the same as the prescription drug patches? I would say in almost every case the answers are no and no.

Here are some even more enlightening facts:

- In 1988, The FDA seized a supply of Appetoff patches, which were nothing more than circular band aids that instructed users to place a drop of supposed fat-burning liquid on it. The patches were tested and found to contain no active ingredients. If you're wondering whether anyone would be dumb enough to buy such a thing, then consider that \$22 million worth of these patches were seized when the FDA busted down the doors.
- In March 2004, Peel Away the Pounds settled with the FTC, agreeing to pay back more than one million dollars to ripped off consumers after being charged that they made false and unsubstantiated claims about their weight loss patch, such as three to five pounds per week in weight loss.
- In November 2004, Illinois attorney general Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit against a Nevada corporation, Diet Patch, Inc., for luring consumers to their website with false claims and free trial offers for their diet patch. They were charged with multiple violations of the consumer fraud and deceptive business practices act.
- In December 2004, the Canadian equivalent of the FTC ordered a diet patch company to pay full refunds for purchases of diet

patches Zyapax and Dyapax, and they were banned from making further false claims about the product.

- In March 2005, The FTC ordered the shutdown of “The Amazing Diet Patch” after massive numbers of consumer complaints flooded in about the product not working as advertised and about unauthorized billing of their credit cards after agreeing only to a free trial.
- In January 2006, A Michigan man was sentenced to two years in jail after being charged with sending millions of spam email messages to sell phony diet aids including the Avatar diet patch. (FTC vs. Phoenix Avatar.)

This is only a tiny portion of the cases, and all this information is available on public record for anyone who cares enough to do their homework before spending their money.

This is not one of those products that might work or could work or needs more research—it’s a scam. One of the FTC’s red flag criteria for weight loss scams is if the product claims to produce weight loss by wearing it on or rubbing it into your skin. The FTC says that diet patches have never been shown to be safe or effective and never received FDA approval.

There have also been some very shady companies involved in all kinds of deception and illegal activities ranging from unsubstantiated claims, spam email, use of shell corporations, and unauthorized credit card billing, where they keep refilling your supply every month and keep whacking your credit card forever and make you jump through hoops to get them to stop billing you.

I get boiling mad when I start looking into just how bad this is and how many millions of dollars are wasted because overweight people say, “Well, I’m just going to try it anyway,” because they’re desperate. Unless you like making scammers and spammers rich, stay away from diet patches.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Interesting. So what, if any, rules or regulations should be attached to dietary supplements to help stop these scams?

**TOM VENUTO:** This is a tough question because we have so many scams. It would be good to get some kind of control over this for the sake of

consumer protection, but on the other hand I'm a very strong believer in an individual's freedom to choose and in a business's freedom to sell what they want to sell as long as it's done legally and ethically.

Even if I don't believe in a particular product, as long as there is no serious danger and companies are not breaking the law, then I don't think the government or any regulation agencies should step in and take away our freedom to choose. I don't think it was necessary to pull ephedrine off the market, for example.

I think we simply need more fitness professionals to stop selling this crap for the sake of the quick buck and start being role models and providing nutrition and exercise education and the proper warnings.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Let's move on and start talking about abdominal training. I've written an abdominal training book called *Firm and Flatten Your Abs*, which of course, I know you are very familiar with because you wrote the foreword for me—thank you again, by the way. The book explains my philosophy of functional training for your abdominals and your entire core. I come from a sports training and functional training background, and I'd be interested in hearing which abdominal exercises you would recommend since you come from a bodybuilding background. Also, from a bodybuilder's perspective, I'm wondering what you see as the difference between training for function and training for form.

**TOM VENUTO:** This is a really important question because much of what we do in bodybuilding for cosmetic goals and building muscle mass is different from what athletes do in their training for performance and function goals. But no matter what you're training for, you have to train smart so you stay injury free, and I think functional training has a lot to do with avoiding injury.

When we say “function” or “functional,” we are talking about how you perform on the playing field and in day-to-day activities without dysfunction. When we say “form,” we're talking about how you look.

Bodybuilding is a unique sport with unique training needs and requirements. In bodybuilding, we are not judged on performance, we are actually judged on form or looks. It doesn't matter how much I lift, how fast I run, how hard I hit, or how high I can vertical jump. As a bodybuilder, my purpose is to look better on stage.

If that's true, then I could say that anything I do that helps me look better and keeps me free of injury so I can train for looking better is functional. All training that leads to injury is faulty, non-functional training, and bodybuilders are often guilty of mistakes in program design and exercise performance that get them injured. To add insult to that injury, it's self-inflicted because there's no physical contact with another player as there is in other sports.

A common bodybuilder mistake is training for your ego and being only interested in how much you can lift regardless of your exercise form or the effect on your physique. Another mistake is using machines exclusively. There are functional training experts that say you should never use machines, and I would say if we're talking about bodybuilding, they are mistaken. Whether machines are appropriate depends on the context. It may be wrong to put their athletes on machines in favor of free weights, but machines are an extremely valuable tool for bodybuilders and those with bodybuilding goals.

There are machines that can work a muscle group from an angle that free weights cannot duplicate due to gravity and resistance curves. Bodybuilders should train lots of different angles and lots of different exercises to fill in "holes" in muscular development or to target certain small areas to improve symmetry and proportion. The body *can* be reshaped with bodybuilding training and careful selection of exercises. For example, the lateral deltoid or the rear deltoid is incredibly important to enhance the illusion of the V-taper and a small waist, but when does a football player need to worry about his lateral or rear delt development?

The trouble is not the use of machines but the use of machines in an inappropriate context or the overuse or exclusive use of machines. If you're a bodybuilder and your program is back squats, barbell dynamic lunges, and hack machine squats, your

routine isn't faulty or non-functional just because you included one machine. That's a well designed bodybuilding routine, and hack squats are an important exercise for bodybuilders.

A routine is also not faulty just because you train in split routines and focus on individual body parts. There's a reason bodybuilders think in terms of body parts and split routines, and that's because the repeated effort, volume, and variety methods are an important part of hypertrophy training. Multiple sets and multiple exercises on a single body part take time, and there is only so much time you can spend per workout before it becomes unproductive.

An important part of your split routine and body part training is that you balance the workload and strength development between the muscle groups. For example, bodybuilders often blast their quads, then do hamstrings last when they have no energy left, and they end up with three or four half-assed sets of lying leg curls. They should be balancing their hams with their quads not just for proper physique development but to prevent muscle imbalances that can lead to injury or joint instability.

It's the same thing with abdominal training. You see a lot of overuse of the crunch exercise and crunch variations. If you do absolutely nothing but floor crunches without working your lower back and using variety in your exercise choices, you may be setting yourself up for problems. So you balance your spinal flexion movements with spinal extension movements like hyperextensions and spinal stabilizer exercises.

Many people believe weak abs are a major cause of lower back pain, and lack of abdominal and core strength are factors, but a lot of people with lower back problems simply have weak backs and spinal stabilizers due to sheer neglect. Look at the average training program of anyone training for bodybuilding and general fitness, and I can almost guarantee there are far more reps of ab crunches and flexion being done than lower back and extension work.

Having said all this, I like to mix the traditional bodybuilding ab exercises with the core exercises that are so popular today, not relying on one or the other. I've heard so many times trainers saying, "Crunches are totally worthless," but there is a place for all kinds of ab exercises. The key is balance and variety.

Here are some of my favorite abdominal exercises:

- Crunches (various types)
- Weighted crunches (various types)
- Kneeling cable rope crunch (straight on or with an elbow-to-knee twist)
- Twisting crunch (elbow to opposite knee)
- Side crunch
- Reverse crunch
- Reverse crunch on incline slant board
- Hip lift (toes to sky)
- Hanging knee-ups from ab slings
- Hanging leg raises from ab slings

In recent years I've added a lot more core work, stability ball work, and rotational work such as:

- Stability ball crunches
- Stability ball reverse crunches
- Stability ball side crunches
- Stability ball jackknives
- Side planks
- Planks
- Upper body Russian twists on the Swiss ball, holding plate or medicine ball
- Lower body Russian twists, bent knee or straight legged (aka windshield wipers)
- Cable woodchoppers

I didn't throw out the staple exercises I depended on for all those years, I just balanced my routine. I have to admit, I was stubborn at first about adding the new stuff.

I remember the first time I ever saw the plank exercise years ago. I was working out with a female friend of mine. She showed me the plank and I laughed at her and said, "What the heck is that—that doesn't do anything for your abs!" It was my typical crunches for six-pack abs bodybuilder mentality at the time. I was the same way about the Swiss ball at first—I wouldn't have been seen on one of those things if you paid me. Now I know what these

exercises can do, and it's more than just about six-pack abs—it's also about keeping a strong and stable spine and core so I can do my bodybuilding exercises like squats and rows safely.

Changing your exercises and using a lot of variety helps your development and also prevents you from getting bored, because as you said in your book, there are hundreds of exercises and variations you can do for your abs. But most people just keep doing the same old thing—crunch, sit-up, and leg raise, and that's it.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** While we're on the subject of bodybuilding training, I'd also like to know how much cardio and weight training you would recommend for burning fat and for getting chiseled and defined abs like you have.

**TOM VENUTO:** Getting chiseled and defined abs is mostly nutrition. If your diet isn't in place, then you can't support your training or maintain a healthy metabolism. If your diet is a mess, put the most focus on fixing that first. The second factor is the exercise. You need specific abdominal exercises to develop the six-pack look, but most people also need a good amount of cardio to burn the fat off so you can see the six-pack. You could have awesome abs that are completely covered up with a layer of flab.

I look at cardio as fat burning exercise and weight training as muscle building or maintaining exercise. Lately, there's been a lot of talk about weight training being great for fat burning, and it is. You could use weight training exclusively to burn fat, but the more you turn your weight training into circuit training for fat burning, the less strength and muscle growth you'll get and the further you're getting away from bodybuilding.

There's a happy medium for people with weight loss and general fitness goals, where weight training can kill two birds with one stone. You can get fat loss and some muscle development, but for bodybuilding purposes, I separate cardio for fat burning from weight training for muscle building.

My weight training program is a four-day split routine on a two days on, one day off rotation. That means that each major muscle

group is trained once every six days. My abs and my calves are the only body parts I train twice a week. I think some people could benefit from training abs every other day, but not daily.

I would recommend this type of split routine to any serious bodybuilder, or anyone with muscle growth goals, although it's not the way athletes would train, and it's only one of many ways that average people with health, fitness, and fat loss goals could train. Each person has to adjust his training frequency to his own body and personal goals.

As for cardio, that varies a lot. I don't recommend a single prescription for cardio—it's variable, and I do as little as I can get away with but as much as is necessary. Cardio is a fat burning tool for me and I use it to burn calories. I prefer to burn more calories as a fat burning strategy on a fat loss program rather than to cut calories. I focus on the calorie deficit, of course, but I also focus on the total calories burned as the primary factor. A 500-calorie deficit at an intake of 3000 calories is in no way the same 500-calorie deficit at 1500 calories a day. At 1500 calories a day, you're getting half the vitamins, half the minerals, half the phytonutrients, half the macronutrients, and half the thermogenic effect of a 500-calorie deficit at 3000 calories per day, without the benefits that come from the exercise.

People have different body types and vary how much cardio they need, so I could tell you what I do, but it may not be the same for you. We all know some mesomorph, which is the genetically gifted body type, who does zero cardio and has shredded abs all year round. Most people need cardio to get lean and see defined abdominals—at least three days a week, and you increase from that point based on results.

For me and a lot of other people, three days is only maintenance. If I stop doing cardio, I gain enough fat so the abs are gone no matter what I eat. That's just the way my genetics and body type are. That's why I do my cardio all year round, but I cycle the amount, type, frequency, duration, and intensity, so when I increase the volume during a cutting phase, my body responds to it.

I usually do cardio daily for 30–45 minutes before contests or whenever I want to get really lean. If I have to, I'll even do two

30-minute sessions a day to knock off the last bit of fat. Then I back off to one session in the final couple of weeks and cut the cardio completely the last three to seven days before the show to let myself fill out a bit. Then it's back to three days a week for maintenance.

I know the hot thing now is interval training. Interval training is great and I like interval training, but I've used primarily steady state cardio through almost all of the 28 competitions I've done, so you can't say steady state cardio doesn't work, even though I hear trainers actually say that sometimes. What they should be saying is higher intensity cardio burns more calories in less time.

For some people, walking is a great form of cardio, especially beginners, those out of shape, or the elderly, but based on what you read in some of the magazines these days, you'd think that if you're not doing sprints or high intensity intervals, you're doing it all wrong, and that's just not true; that's simply a reflection of what is trendy now. I know drug-free bodybuilders who walk on the treadmill for an hour a day and, when combined with their diet and weight training, they're the most ripped and muscular athletes on the face of the earth. I also know very obese men and women who were 300 or 400 pounds to start, and they lost all the weight with walking, weight training, and good nutrition.

Choosing your cardio comes down to personal goals, personal preference, how important time efficiency is to you and—most important of all—what kind of results you're getting. There are many opinions about cardio, and many opinionated people. Well, there is no best cardio workout. All exercise is good exercise if it's burning calories, getting you results, and it's not injuring you. Stop over analyzing. Just get out there and burn calories, and if you're getting results, keep doing it! The more you burn, the more fat you lose, and the better your abs will look!

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Right. Cardio is important for your health too, and walking has great health benefits. But let me ask you this: Training for bodybuilding is a completely different concept than training for health. At what point does training become excessive and unhealthy?

**TOM VENUTO:** I hope you don't mind me rephrasing your question because I understand exactly what you're asking, but the way you phrased it could be interpreted as meaning that bodybuilding is inherently unhealthy. That's not true if it's done intelligently and without drugs.

Unfortunately, bodybuilding is infested with anabolic drug use and that's one of the things that could potentially make bodybuilding unhealthy. I truly believe that natural bodybuilding is one of the healthiest lifestyles anyone could ever adopt. As long as bodybuilding is done drug free and is kept in balance with other things in life, then there's nothing unhealthy about it. At the competitive level, it requires extreme dedication and discipline, but that's true for any sport.

Wrestlers probably put their body through more stress than bodybuilders do, and look at the literal pounding that boxers and football players take. Is that unhealthy? Well, I guess that depends on how you look at it. I think it's just part of what competitive sports are about. Just keep everything in balance, don't push to the point of injury, and avoid the win at all costs mentality.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** You were talking earlier about the importance of functional training for injury prevention. You've confided in me in the past about your bouts with lower back pain, and I know you've had some considerable success in overcoming a pretty serious disc injury. What steps should someone take when they are faced with lower back pain and they still want to train and lose body fat?

**TOM VENUTO:** First I'm going to give you a shameless plug and tell everyone they should buy your book, because I learned a lot from your book and from all our conversations these past few years. I think I covered a lot of this already when I talked about making a bodybuilding routine more functional and taking steps to improve your program design to help keep you injury free.

Why don't I just sum it up with a punch list? This is also assuming you are working with a doctor or therapist. If you've had a lower back injury, don't do anything without checking with your doctor first.

1. Don't just do traditional ab exercises like crunches and reverse crunches. Be sure to do some work including Swiss ball exercises, rotational exercises such as the cable woodchopper or Russian twists, as well as core stabilization exercises like the plank and side plank.
2. Be cautious of exercises like sit-ups and Roman chair sit-ups if you have back pain. You may know people who do hundreds of sit-ups and their abs look great and they never had a problem with back pain in their life, but if you have existing back pain, you'd better be careful with exercises that predominantly use the hip flexors.
3. Use progression in your training. Exercises go up in levels of difficulty from so easy they're mainly rehabilitative, to so hard that only a seasoned athlete could get through a single set. If you try advanced exercises without building up slowly, you're likely to injure your back even further. For example, don't try hanging straight leg raises if you can't even do them bent knee with good form. If you can't lunge properly with your body weight, don't do them with dumbbells or a barbell.
4. Add some exercises for the spinal stabilizers. In your book, David, you recommend the horse stance exercises, and prone alternating arm and leg raises, which are great. I know other trainers and therapists who really like the prone (lying on your stomach) superman and the cobra exercise as well. All these movements have the same purpose, which is to strengthen the spinal stabilizers.
5. Work on as much spinal extension as spinal flexion. The flexion is the crunches, and if you do hundreds of crunches a day and you neglect extensions and the lower back, you're asking for trouble. I like the lower back extensions, also called hyperextensions, and I love the reverse hyperextension, which you can do on a special bench or with a Swiss ball.
6. Avoid high-risk exercises like bent over rows and squats. If you're able to do them, then do them with impeccable form and avoid super heavy weights. There's no need to go heavy when you can make a moderate or light weight feel heavier with stricter form and variations in technique like slowing

down your reps, using continuous tension and not locking out, decreasing your rest intervals, and other methods.

7. Use very strict form in your abdominal training, and that includes performing the exercises slowly and deliberately with physical and mental concentration on the quality of contraction. A lot of people are conditioned to do ab exercises such as sit-ups for time, but fast reps reduce the quality of muscle contraction because the movements are being executed with momentum and not muscle action. This can also increase the likelihood of injury. Slow down and squeeze!

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Good advice. It sounds like you actually did read my book! Okay, next question. A lot of women would like to know more about cellulite. Many are confused about what it really is, how it develops and, of course, how to get rid of it. Can you shed some light on this for us?

**TOM VENUTO:** Cellulite is just body fat. The only difference is the dimpled appearance, which most experts say is from the connective tissue mixed in with the fat. I've encountered women so adamant about thinking cellulite is totally different from body fat, that they actually argue with me about and insist they need something else besides nutrition and exercise.

The reason women are confused is because of the way cellulite is portrayed in the media and in the advertisements as something that requires special remedies. An entire \$100-million industry has been spun around this one idea. The truth is, you lose cellulite the same way you lose any other type of fat—with nutrition and training.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Women also tend to gain weight and have trouble with lower abdominal pooch when they get older and go through menopause. Is it because their metabolism slows down that much?

**TOM VENUTO:** Here's the bottom line. The physical declines you see in most men and women as they get older is 30% due to our genetic code and the fact that the body will age no matter what and we will all eventually die someday. But the other 70% of how well we age is lifestyle.

We are not supposed to get weak, fat, and decrepit as we get older. These are all manifestations of lifestyle choices we have made and that we are in control of. Sure, it gets a little harder as you get older, especially past 50 and 60, but 70% of the effects of aging that we see in the general population are due to neglect and lazy lifestyle. Exercise and nutrition must be lifelong commitments, and you have to use it or you lose it. If you do use it, you can lose fat, get a flat stomach, and look fantastic at any age.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** How does weight training benefit the elderly?

**TOM VENUTO:** I co-authored an entire book on this called *Fit Over 40; Role Models for Excellence at Any Age*, and I recommend that everyone over 40 look into it. To summarize the whole thing—I'm convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that keeping the muscle you have and building muscle through strength training is as close to the fountain of youth as you will ever find.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Many people e-mail me about fat loss plateaus. They lose fat successfully for a long time, then it's always that last little bit of fat that keeps sticking to their lower abs and love handles, and it's usually just enough left that they can't quite see their abs yet, but they're so close. I'm familiar with your philosophies on this and you cover the topic of breaking fat loss plateaus as thoroughly as anyone. Could you give our readers some information that they could use?

**TOM VENUTO:** That's extremely common. I get emails about that all day long as well. Most people hit those plateaus after very successful initial weight loss because they took the wrong approach—not enough calories, not enough exercise. When you start with low calories you have nothing to fall back on except even lower calories, and that digs you deeper into a metabolic hole.

There are so many different approaches to breaking plateaus. This is part of the reason why my *Burn the Fat* system works so well—because it has so much flexibility built into it. If one thing doesn't work, you have dozens, hundreds even, of other methods you can fall back on.

If your diet or training program is too rigid or inflexible, then if you hit a plateau, you're stuck aren't you? More of the same will only bring more of the same. You have to make a change, and the skill is knowing what part of the nutrition or training is the best variable to modify. My ***Burn the Fat*** program teaches you how to use a feedback loop system to analyze your results and decide what the best method is to keep the progress coming.

Part of choosing your plateau-breaking strategy depends on how well you've been complying. The first thing I ask my clients is, "Rate your last week on a scale from 1 to 10, with 9 being 90% compliance, 7 being 70% compliance, and so on." If it's not at least 90% compliance, there's no plateau to break; you're just not being strict enough—you're not following the program.

Another part of which strategy to choose—whether it's stricter diet, fewer carbs, more cardio, or whatever—is to look at what you've been doing in the past few months, not just the last few days.

For example, it seems counter intuitive, but if I'm consulting someone who has been doing an hour and a half of cardio a day for the past three years, I might suspect aerobic adaptation and have him or her cut back on the cardio for a while and focus more on weight training. I'm very much in favor of using cardio liberally, but the trouble with cardio is that if you do too much of the same thing for too long, you adapt to it. You have to cycle the volume or at least change the type and program design dramatically.

On the other hand, if I have someone who is only one month into a training program with three sessions of cardio per week, who was inactive before starting the program, then increasing cardio would be my first plateau-breaking strategy because aerobic adaptation is definitely not the cause of the plateau in that case. I just want them to burn more calories. There's a lot more info on plateau-breaking strategies in my ***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle*** book.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** If you can keep getting leaner and leaner using all these strategies, how far should you go? Being very lean is held in high regard in our culture, and fitness models, fashion models, and movie stars seem to be setting a standard of beauty and attractiveness, so some

people are really pushing themselves to get as lean as humanly possible. What are your suggestions on safe body fat levels?

**TOM VENUTO:** I can give you some specific guidelines about body fat percentage levels, but the most important suggestion of all that I can give is to focus on self improvement. Become better than you used to be, not better than someone else.

Even if you're in a competitive situation such as a figure or fitness or bodybuilding or transformation challenge competition, ultimately the best thing you can do is compete against yourself. Each time you step on stage or do a photo shoot, aim for an all-time personal best. We each have unique genetics and unique gifts and talents, and we need to be aware of them and do the best with what we have.

Role models are very important, and it's not wrong to use other people as role models to encourage us to aim higher and even raise our standards. We should all have role models, and if we want to look to the top fitness models as role models, that's great. Some people set their goals too low and set their standards too low, but it's better to aim high, and role models help give us a target and the inspiration to go for it.

The trouble occurs if you look at someone else, like a magazine cover model or a movie star, set that physique as your standard and also set your expectations accordingly—without taking into consideration your own body type, genetics, and the lifestyle you're willing to lead.

What can happen then is you may get discouraged if and when you don't end up looking like your role model. This leads people in one of two directions: discouragement or disorder.

Discouragement can lead to quitting, or it can go the opposite direction and you can become obsessive. Someone once said that "obsessed" is a word that the lazy use to describe the dedicated. This may be true, but you have the issues of disordered eating and excessive exercise addiction or overtraining.

As for safe body fat levels, being too lean can be unhealthy, especially for women because the menstrual cycle can stop when body fat gets too low, and men can have problems if their

hormones are at extremely low levels. The immune system can be affected too.

When you look at recommended body fat levels, it's really important to realize what is your year round maintenance or lifestyle level of fat and what is peaking for competition or photo shoot level, because those can be two totally different things. What you see in the magazines is usually the day of a competition peak.

A male physique athlete might be 8–12% body fat in the off season and then drop all the way down to 3–6% body fat for a competition. A female might be 15–18% in the off season and drop to 9–12% for a competition. Those low numbers are peaks for competition, not something you would try to or want to maintain all the time.

Basically, the idea is to stay lean all year round, then get very lean or ripped for only short periods of time. If you understand this concept, you're not going to endanger your health so long as you reach that peak condition the natural way without drugs or extreme measures.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Okay. What is your real opinion on leanness? How lean do you have to be to see your abdominal six-pack?

**TOM VENUTO:** There's no single number or chart that will apply to everyone because the physical appearance different people have at the same body fat level can vary a lot. One woman can look totally ripped with six-pack abs at 16% body fat and another can look as if she's still holding a little visible fat in the abs at the same 16%. This is just genetic uniqueness in how and where we store our fat.

Body fat measurements should be used as a way to track your progress from one week or one month to the next, not to compare yourself to someone else or to a certain standard on paper. There are some good guidelines, though, and one of them is the body fat chart I created for my ***Burn the Fat*** program:

***Burn the Fat Body Fat Guidelines*****MEN**

Competition Shape ("ripped")	3–6%
Very Lean (excellent)	9% or less
Lean (good)	10–14%
Average (fair)	15–19%
Below average (poor)	20–25%
Major improvement needed (very poor)	26–30+%

**WOMEN**

Competition Shape ("ripped")	9–12%
Very Lean (excellent)	15% or less
Lean (good)	16–20%
Average (fair)	21–25%
Below average (poor)	26–30%
Major improvement needed (very poor)	31–35+%

One of my former training partners measured about 9% body fat, and he looked super lean with defined abs at that level. When I measure at 9% body fat, my abs look a little bit smooth, so it's very difficult to put a specific number on it. As a general guideline, most men will start to see some abdominal definition when they drop under 10% body fat into the single digits. For a totally ripped stomach with virtually no visible fat whatsoever, you are talking about low to mid single digits—4%–7% body fat or so.

Women usually start to show abdominal definition when their body fat drops into the mid to upper teens, and look ripped in the lower teens. Competition shape for female bodybuilding, fitness, and figure competition ranges from low teens to high single digits. Single-digit body fat is rare for women except for physique athletes and endurance athletes, and it's not realistic to expect to stay that lean and probably not healthy either.

I've heard professional female bodybuilders claim mid single digits, but that is probably done with the help of pharmaceuticals. When women take male hormones, they take on male characteristics, and one of those is achieving body fat levels equal to men. I wouldn't advise women to take that route unless they want a beard and a voice like James Earl Jones.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Listen to Tom, ladies and gentlemen. Stay away from drugs—there are no shortcuts! Since we're on the subject of body fat and abdominal body fat, what are different ways to measure body fat? I think many people get confused about the measuring process. Why would you want to measure? I always tell my clients the mirror tells all like in Cinderella! What do you think?

**TOM VENUTO:** I would say that the mirror alone might be better than the scale alone, but knowing your body composition does have great value. I know a lot of bodybuilders who never measure body fat, and they can time their competition peak with the precision of an F-16 landing on an aircraft carrier. All they use is the mirror. However, these are athletes with high levels of what I call "sensory acuity." That means they can tell by feel, touch, sight, and even pure instinct exactly when something is working and exactly when they are making progress or stalling out.

The advantage of body fat testing is that it gives you objective feedback and lets you track your fat weight and lean weight and not just your total weight. Total body weight losses on a scale can be very misleading. Much of that is from loss in water weight that happens when you start a lot of diets, especially low carb diets. But you have to realize that some of the weight you lose could also be muscle, especially if your calories are too low or if you're not doing any weight training. A body fat test, like a simple skinfold caliper test, will tell you what you're losing—fat or muscle.

I know what you're getting at when you suggest that the mirror is where it's at, but I think body fat measurements are very valuable, and if you have access to accurate testing you should take advantage of it. The more feedback you have to chart your progress the better. It's also a great motivational tool.

The trouble only occurs when your body fat percentage number becomes some kind of Holy Grail to you and it's the only thing you focus on. I've seen that happen a lot. I've seen people go from elation to total depression just based on the results of their weekly pinch-an-inch test, and they walk around mentally defeated for days. That is not productive.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Tom, as an expert on diet and nutrition, I'd like to ask your thoughts on low carb eating. Is it safe? How long should we do it? Are there any long term risks?

**TOM VENUTO:** There is no doubt in my mind that reducing carbs can help accelerate fat loss for short periods during fat loss programs. I just do it differently, more sensibly, and with more flexibility than most traditional low carb diets.

The problem with low carbs in general is that most people don't take into account their individual goals and unique body type, so they follow a one-size-fits-all prescription of the latest low-carb program and they take the carb restriction too far. Zero carb or close to zero carb diets are, in my opinion, completely unnecessary and way too extreme. If you can find a happy medium, you may be really surprised at how well it works.

A common problem with sustained very low carb diets is the rebound effect. The lower you drop your carbs, the more likely you will be to have a relapse and gain the fat back when you put the carbs back in, unless you have the willpower and discipline of an elite athlete and you can ease back into higher carb eating.

With these caveats, reducing carbs does help fat loss in many cases because it helps control your insulin and blood sugar more effectively than a high carb diet, and that has a lot to do with how your body stores fat. The high protein in these diets also speeds up your metabolism because of the "thermic effect" of protein food.

You also can't forget that if you cut back on grains and starches, it's a lot harder to over-consume calories. Unless you're really indulging on the fats, a low starch and low grain, high lean protein and high fibrous carb diet has built in calorie control. You have to

be careful, though, because without at least some complex carbs, you won't have enough energy to train hard.

When you're talking about low carb diets you also need to pay close attention to the *type* of carbs you eat. You can't just say eat less carbs altogether—that's too simplistic. It's not just the quantity of carbs, it's the quality.

Before you even bother with reducing carbs, get all the junk out and get off *all* processed carbs including refined bread, crackers, pretzels, pasta, bagels, and switch only to natural, unprocessed carbs like vegetables, oatmeal, yams, rice, potatoes, and so on. Once you've done that, then you can start thinking of backing off even the natural starches and grains if you're not very carb tolerant.

I think that a moderately reduced carb diet that is done in low- and high-carb cycles is the most sensible approach and the one you're most likely to stick with.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Great information, Tom. What's a good carb cutting cycle to lose body fat and get lean?

**TOM VENUTO:** Carb cycling is an awesome method for fat loss. It's much better than staying on low carbs all the time. It helps accelerate your fat loss, prevents your metabolism from slowing down into "starvation mode," and at the same time makes your diet easier to stick to because you get to "re-feed" and eat more on the higher carb/higher calorie day.

There are a lot of ways to do this. One of the older methods is five days on a strict very low carb or ketogenic diet, then two days of "pigging out" on high carbs on the weekend. Some people had results with this, but I see flaws in it. By the fourth and fifth day, you're starving and craving everything, and you tend to binge inappropriately on your high carb weekends. Some people cycle up and down at random, or time their carb intake with their training days, and that can work too. I prefer three days of low or moderate carbs followed by one to three days of high carbs because of its sheer simplicity and because it works.

Here's an example of how I use this carb cycling method myself: For three low carb days I eat about 175–200 grams of carbs with most of the carbs eaten early in the day and only lean protein, fibrous carbs, and good fats in the evenings. Every fourth day I cycle my carbs by having a high carb “re-feed” day of about 300–400 grams of carbs.

Women will probably be closer to 100–125 grams on low days and 200–250 on high days, but it varies based on energy output, carb tolerance, and the results you're getting. It could be a little bit more or a little bit less. If you're really depleted and losing weight too fast, you might do a second or third day on high carbs or eat more carbs on the high days before going back to the low carb cycle. If you're not losing fat fast enough, you would stay with three low days to one high day and you might eat fewer calories and carbs on the low days.

The way to tell how many grams of carbs is right for you is to start with a sensible baseline and then experiment with carb reductions on your low carb days until you find your optimal carb level.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Low carbs were all the rage for a long time and it's now just starting to cool off, but the low fat craze is still in vogue for some people. What are some of the downsides of fat free diets or fat free foods for your body or weight loss goals?

**TOM VENUTO:** People are finally starting to get educated about good carbs and bad carbs instead of just no carbs, and they're also getting educated about good fats and bad fats instead of just no fat. But you're 100% correct that low fat is still very much in vogue with many people. One reason is because of the word “fat.” Dietary fat and body fat are two different things, but people simply make a mental association and link the two together, and they're scared to eat fat.

I have to admit I went through this fat phobia myself. I remember one medical doctor who wrote a low fat diet book and his mantra was, “The fat you eat is the fat you wear.” Years of “eat fat, get fat” programming can be really hard to get out of your head. When I was in high school and college, low fat was the thing. But it wasn't just a fad diet book trend, it was being taught by MDs and

nutrition professionals, so I cut almost all the fat out of my diet for a long time. When I went from a diet that was 7–10% of calories from dietary fat to about 20% of calories from well chosen dietary fats, the results were noticeable in muscle growth, fat loss, and energy.

One of the downsides with fat free foods is that you tend to over-consume them and they don't satisfy you or fill you up. Paul Chek calls that the "Just can't eat one syndrome," and I think there is actually a snack food company that uses that as their tag line on the package.

Did you ever sit in front of the TV with a box of "no fat, no trans fat, 100% whole grain" crackers thinking it was great healthy stuff, and before you even put a dent in your stomach, you had eaten half the box, or even the whole box? How about the tub of no fat frozen yogurt or fruit sorbet? Same thing, right? Did you ever realize you can slam down 500, 800, 1000 calories at a clip that way? It's excess calories that makes you fat, not necessarily dietary fat, and it's easy to go overboard on calories with those types of non-fat snack foods.

Also, we talked earlier about moderating carb intake if it's necessary, based on your body type. Well, these low fat snack foods can provide high calories and carbs without the fat and fiber, so you get the insulin spike and blood sugar fluctuations that you want to avoid. Your best bet is to avoid packaged, boxed snack foods or, if you're carb tolerant, eat them in very measured amounts. Focus more on eating foods the way they came out of the ground—lots of fruits and vegetables.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Speaking of insulin, that brings me to the subject of hormones. Your hormones effectively work together to produce your metabolism. My question is, what happens when our hormones become out of balance? For example, you talked about insulin, but what about other hormones? What is adrenal exhaustion and how does it affect our weight loss goals?

**TOM VENUTO:** Your hormones are chemical messengers that control everything that takes place in your body. If your hormones are messed up, it

can throw a wrench in the fat loss works and make getting leaner more difficult.

For example, the hormone leptin is especially interesting when it comes to fat loss because it tells your brain whether you are starving or not. If your brain gets the starvation signal because leptin is low, then other hormones such as thyroid, which is responsible for keeping your metabolism humming along, is decreased and your body goes into starvation mode. In fact, some experts say that leptin itself *is* the starvation mode. You can maintain normal leptin levels by dieting intelligently and not starving yourself and by using the re-feed and cycling method I talked about earlier, but some people are leptin resistant just as they can be insulin resistant. Good nutrition and training over time will fix that.

Insulin is the hormone released by the pancreas in response to increases in blood sugar. Insulin is important because it's an anabolic hormone, but it can be a double-edged sword because it can also promote fat storage. Insulin brings blood sugar down by driving glucose into the muscle cells and also driving amino acids into the muscle cells, but at the same time it pushes fat into the cells too.

Sex hormones such as testosterone are the most well known for their impact on muscle growth, and growth hormone works with testosterone to help build muscle. Once again, good nutrition and training combined with proper recovery help to optimize these hormones naturally.

When you talk about adrenal exhaustion, you're now talking about stress response and stress hormones such as cortisol. These hormones can get out of whack when your lifestyle is in disarray, you're not sleeping well, or when you're not eating properly and not exercising, abusing stimulants like caffeine and ephedrine, or even when you abuse exercise by overtraining and under-recovering.

As we've already talked about, the marketplace offers all kinds of solutions to fix our hormone problems, but the only 100% guaranteed solution is lifestyle changes. Exercise, including strength training, not just aerobics, combined with proper nutrition

will fix almost any hormonal problem that is not clinical in nature. If it's clinical, then work with your doctor.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Let's stay on this subject for a minute: insulin, blood sugar, and carbs. The glycemic index is the scale that measures the rate at which food causes glucose levels to rise in the blood after you eat carbs. Is this really an effective method for losing body fat?

**TOM VENUTO:** I mention the glycemic index (GI) in my fat loss program just to explain what it is, but I don't include a GI chart because that would be just one more complicated thing people would have to keep track of. I don't think it's necessary if you watch your calories and you go by another criteria for picking your carbs—that is, whether the carb is natural or refined.

GI isn't the critical or deciding factor in weight loss that a lot of people and diet books say it is. There are several books written on the subject that put the GI up on a pedestal as *the* critical factor, but it's only one factor.

GI goes by a scale of 1 to 100 that measures how quickly carbohydrate foods are broken down into glucose. According to advocates of the GI system, foods that are high on the scale such as rice cakes, carrots, potatoes, watermelon, or grape juice are “unfavorable” and should be avoided because high GI foods are absorbed quickly, raise blood sugar rapidly, and are therefore more likely to convert to fat or cause blood sugar-related health problems.

Instead, they tell us to eat carbohydrates that are low on the GI scale such as black eyed peas, barley, old fashioned oatmeal, peanuts, grapefruit, apples, and beans because those foods are low on the GI scale and do not raise blood sugar as rapidly.

The GI has some practical uses for those with blood sugar regulation problems. In fact, the original purpose for the GI was as a tool to help diabetics keep their blood sugar under control. The reason I don't put that much emphasis on GI for fat loss is because there are flaws in strictly using the GI as your only criterion to choose carbs.

For example, the GI scale was developed based on eating 50 grams of carbohydrates by themselves in a fasted state. Note two things—the quantity: 50 grams—and when it was eaten: fasted. If you are following effective principles of fat-burning and muscle-building nutrition such as those outlined in my *Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle* (BFFM) ebook ([www.BurnTheFat.com](http://www.BurnTheFat.com)), you should be eating small, frequent meals to increase your energy, maintain lean body mass and optimize metabolism for fat loss. If you eat small frequent meals of mixed protein and carbohydrates, not just carbs by themselves, then the glycemic index loses some of its significance because the protein and fat slow the absorption of the carbohydrates (as does fiber).

The glycemic load was developed to account for some of the flaws in GI, but then you have another chart to worry about, so I don't bother with that either. A more important and relevant criterion for choosing carbs on a fat loss program—as well as all your other foods, proteins and fats included—is whether they are natural or processed. To say that a healthy person with no metabolic disorders should completely avoid natural, unprocessed foods like carrots or potatoes simply because they are high on the glycemic index doesn't make sense to me. How could you say carrots are fattening or unhealthy?

High GI foods don't necessarily make you fat, and eating low GI foods alone doesn't guarantee you will lose fat. You have to take in the bigger picture, which includes calories/energy balance, meal timing and frequency, macronutrient composition, choice of processed versus refined foods, as well as how all these nutritional factors interact with your exercise program.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** That's a good way to put it in perspective. I know you and I have talked about organic foods in the past. I'm a big believer in organics; however, you are a little slower to come to the table. What is your opinion of them now?

**TOM VENUTO:** You're right. I wasn't even aware of organic farming and organic food for a long time, and then I was aware of it for a while but I still didn't eat organic. Then, the more I studied the subject and the more I researched commercial farming, industrial pollution, and

the chemicals that end up in our food, the more the organic argument started making sense.

Here's what I learned from my research, a lot of it from Paul Chek and resources he recommended, by the way. The Food and Drug Administration lists more than 3,000 chemicals that can be added to our food supply, and one billion pounds of pesticides and agro-farming chemicals are used on our crops every year. Depending on what source you quote, the average American consumes as much as 150 pounds of chemicals and food additives per year.

Food grown on certified organic farms does not contain pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, hormones, antibiotics, or chemical fertilizers. It is also not irradiated or genetically modified. Supporters of organic food also suggest that the vitamin, mineral, and phytonutrient content of commercially grown foods can be anywhere from a little bit low to virtually absent.

I mentioned organic food to a friend of mine last week, and he asked, "Do you mean like what you get at Whole Foods?" I said, "Yes, exactly... that's a natural food and organic supermarket." He said, "Yeah, well, that place costs so much, I call it Whole Paycheck!"

Organic food is more expensive but I think it's probably worth it, and if money is not an object for you, then why not invest in premium fuel? Look at it this way: If you put the cheapest fuel in your luxury car, how well is it going to run and how many miles are you going to get out of it? You can buy another car, but you only have one body.

I eat much more organic now, but I can't say I eat entirely organic. If I'm eating an apple or some blueberries, and it doesn't happen to be organic, I don't freak out over it. When you really look into the subject of food processing, industrial pollution, and commercial farming, it can almost scare you half to death, but I don't recommend becoming an alarmist. There's an old proverb that the people who live in fear of disease are the ones mostly likely to get it.

As for my own results, I can't honestly say I noticed any dramatic change in my physique or in the way I feel yet. I was a successful

natural bodybuilder for many years before I started eating things like grass-fed beef and organic food. However, I think this is probably the type of nutritional lifestyle change where you'll get benefits over the long term, even if you don't see an immediate transformation.

One thing I would suggest before running out for organic foods is consider what kind of shape your diet and your lifestyle are in right now. If your diet is such a total mess that you're drinking alcohol, smoking, abusing coffee and stimulants, not eating *any* fruits and vegetables to begin with, then I think it might be moot to worry about whether your food is 100% certified organic. Just start cleaning up your diet and establishing new healthy habits, one step at a time.

I know this topic is controversial and hotly debated, but what I would recommend to anyone, whether they choose organic or not, is to continuously look for ways to improve their nutrition above the level it's at now. For some people, going organic is the next level. Some people aren't ready for that type of change yet. I also recommend that everyone become as educated as they can about what is really in their food because most people are completely unaware of what dangers might be lurking in their food.

Your friend Ori Hofmekler wrote something really insightful on this in one of his books. He called these toxins "stealth" factors. He said, "On a daily basis we don't realize (and can't feel) that these toxic factors are present. There's nothing more dangerous than stealth toxins coupled with ignorance because the inability to see or feel these dangers makes us even more vulnerable."

At least be educated and be aware—know what's in your food and then you can make better decisions. A great resource on this subject is Paul Chek's audio program, "You Are What You Eat" and his book, *Eat, Move and Be Healthy*.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** What about detoxification? Detoxification is a new buzzword around the fat loss and health communities. Could you explain a little about this process?

**TOM VENUTO:** Detoxification is a buzzword that's very popular and trendy today, but unfortunately it's really an undefined word that could be referring to a lot of different things. Depending on how the word is used, it could describe everything from legitimate and important nutritional concepts to total gimmicks and crash weight loss diets which are ineffective and unsafe.

We definitely live in a polluted environment where the commercial food supply is full of chemicals, so we all owe it to ourselves to become educated about what is in our food. But we also have to be careful because this detox thing—especially in the context of weight loss—is full of pseudo science and gimmicks that are as bad as the diet patch and diet pill.

Whether you're for or against any kind of detoxification, one thing is hard to dispute: Fasting, cleansing, or detox protocols used to initiate a weight loss program are clearly very sneaky ways to achieve rapid, dramatic losses of body weight. This makes the diet appear highly effective because of the large weight loss right out of the gate, and it makes for great infomercial testimonials.

A fast at the beginning of a diet program can cause very rapid weight loss that could boost the total weight lost over a six-week program to an impressive sounding 25–30 pounds. I say, “Big deal!” Do you want to lose body weight or permanently lose *fat*?

The first 15 pounds is water, glycogen, and muscle tissue. Then maybe 10 pounds is fat—if you're lucky. The first 15–20 pounds will all come back because it was fluid, and the body fat will probably come back too because of the metabolic damage done due to starvation and loss of muscle.

This is similar to the induction phases on certain diet programs. Proponents claim that induction is necessary to metabolically shift you into fat burning mode, but just like a detox phase in the beginning of a weight loss program, I see it more as a quick fix approach to quickly knocking off 10–15 or more pounds of body weight (mostly water), to pander to the instant gratification needs of most dieters, and fill the pockets of their promoters.

Look at the weight loss recommendations of any legitimate science-based health and fitness organization such as the

American College of Sports Medicine, The International Society for Sports Nutrition, The National Strength and Conditioning Association, or the American Dietetic Association, and you will see the same healthy, sensible recommendation repeated over and over again: Lose one to two pounds per week, or no more than 1% of total body weight per week (2.5 pounds if you weigh 250, etc.). Remember what we said about the FTC earlier: Claims of anything over three pounds per week can land a company in court.

If you're consulting with legitimate professionals and organizations, you'll see absolutely no mention of detoxification, fasting, losing 10 pounds over the weekend, "cleansing yourself internally," or anything remotely similar. Why? Because the legitimate and respectable organizations don't deal in pseudo science or gimmick fads. Any crash diet, induction protocol, or fasting ritual designed specifically to induce rapid weight loss is one to avoid.

As for detoxification, it's difficult to draw general conclusions because there are so many different protocols that fall under that term. You might say that eating organic detoxifies you, and if that's your definition of the word, then I wouldn't argue with that, but the fact is, most detox protocols have little scientific evidence supporting them and some are downright kooky!

Will Brink, author of *Diet Supplements Revealed* and *Muscle Building Nutrition*, and a guy whose opinion I respect, posted a message in his forum recently that made this point very well. Will wrote:

Who says you need to detoxify? The very term is quasi scientific at best, silly at worst. Are you looking to optimize increases in lean body mass or sit around drinking lemon water? I don't detoxify, as I don't feel toxic. The methods for detoxifying also run the gamut from real to a total scam. For example, for people that have high amounts of heavy metals, a process called chelation therapy appears to be legit to reduce those levels. Then you have all manner of pretend detoxifying diets, enemas, etc., which I have no faith in.

Do I believe it's important to detoxify the body? Yes, but according to my definition, I believe that detoxing is not necessarily a regimen of supplements, herbs, special drinks,

fasting, or weird internal cleansing procedures. Detoxification is something that you should be doing every single day of your life by making better food choices and avoiding harmful chemicals in the first place. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

You stay non-toxic by drinking large amounts of pure water, by eating natural foods, and avoiding man-made food, refined carbohydrates, processed fats, packaged food, and other “chemical cuisine” as much as possible. You could take it a step further by eating organic foods that are even less likely to contain chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

If detoxing or fasting are important disciplines to you for personal, philosophical, or spiritual reasons, or if you believe you’re getting some measurable benefits, then don’t let me discourage you. But it always comes back to permanent lifestyle change. There is no quick fix, no short term “procedure” to put yourself through. What use is it to detoxify or cleanse or whatever you call it, for 24 hours or three days or seven days, or whatever, if you’re going to go back to the same toxic foods you were eating before anyway? Why not just make the lifestyle change?

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** Speaking of toxins, many people drink alcohol these days. Wine, beer, and spirits are the main alcoholic beverages. Could you talk about the beer belly phenomenon and how alcohol intake defeats body fat reduction?

**TOM VENUTO:** When you talk about alcohol and fat loss you have a few problems. First of all, alcohol is a calorie-dense liquid, so immediately you have a problem with excess calorie intake if you add alcohol and you don’t account for the alcohol calories you’re consuming.

If you do account for calories in the alcohol by decreasing food intake, then you have another problem and that is displacement. By allowing for those alcohol calories, you’ve pushed out of your diet other important foods that contain not just energy, but also vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, fiber, amino acids, and other good stuff you need to be healthy and lose fat.

Alcohol also slows down or stops fat burning in the body. In addition to messing with your hormones that are responsible for efficient fat loss, when alcohol is in your system, fat burning virtually comes to a standstill while your liver is metabolizing the alcohol.

Alcohol can also impair blood sugar and insulin sensitivity, especially in large doses or when consumed by itself. Blood sugar and insulin management is very important for maximizing the fat burning process as well as for your health.

Alcohol in large doses can also increase cortisol release and, to the guys who drink regularly, pay attention because when consumed chronically, alcohol can decrease testosterone and elevate estrogen. Last but not least, alcohol can interfere with the nighttime release of growth hormone that occurs soon after you fall asleep and as you know, most people drink late at night.

If you are on a serious fat loss program, you're compromising your results if you drink at all. The rest of the time, if you drink, you should drink in moderation and infrequently, and not every day, because drinking even small amounts daily is habit-forming.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** You mentioned Paul Chek earlier. There is a group of basic rules for dieting that I learned from my internship at the Chek Institute, and I'd like to pick your brain on those topics. What are your recommendations on water intake, sleep, rotating foods, food intolerances?

**TOM VENUTO:** Okay, we'll start with water. I'm familiar with Paul Chek's recommendation for water intake, and that is to drink at least half your body weight in pounds per day in ounces of water. So if you weigh 200 pounds, drink at least 100 ounces of water.

There are a couple of reasons I like that formula and one is because it is easy to remember. Another is because it is individualized in the way it takes body weight into account. If you wanted to customize even more, you could also take into account activity level and even temperature if you're exercising in the heat.

In my book, ***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle***, I used the National Research Council's water recommendations simply because it

takes into account calorie expenditure. Since I prescribe calories in an individualized fashion using a custom formula like the Katch-McArdle formula, then this formula accounts for both body size and activity.

The NRC's recommended water intake is 1.0–1.5 ml per kilocalorie expended per day. So if you're an average female with a 2200 calorie-a-day energy expenditure, then 1.0–1.5 times 2200 calories is 2200–3300 ml. When you convert the milliliters to ounces, that's 74–111 ounces. That's right in line with Paul's recommendation, although you can see that water intake can be influenced by your energy expenditure. When you exercise more, you should drink more.

The traditional guideline of eight to ten eight-ounce glasses a day is 64–80 ounces, but that's not individualized—it doesn't account for body weight or activity, so that could leave you short, especially for men or for highly active people of either gender.

As for food intolerances, two of the most common are lactose intolerance, which is the body's inability to digest lactose, the natural sugar in milk products, and gluten intolerance. Gluten is the protein found in wheat. So dairy and wheat are often problematic for a fairly large number of people, and they can cause digestive problems and disturbances.

One thing that Paul teaches that will be of major interest to people who want better abs and a flatter stomach is that food intolerances can be a contributing cause to a distended lower abdominal area. Most people realize that bloating and a distended stomach can result from gastrointestinal disturbances, but Paul points out that it can actually go further than that.

He says that when there is trouble in the small intestine, bowel, or any digestive organ, it can cause weakness in the corresponding region of the abdominal wall. He also points out that food allergies and intolerance are common causes of inflammation in the gut, and the greater the level of inflammation in the digestive system the greater the chance that the muscles of the abdominal region won't respond properly to exercise. So basically when you resolve nutritional and digestive issues you can respond to training better.

You could start to address this problem by considering the most common of foods that cause problems such as dairy and wheat or gluten. Then also consider other common allergenic foods which include corn, soy, shellfish, peanuts, and egg whites. If you're eating a food and you suspect it's causing problems, you can use a simple elimination process to identify offending foods by removing *only* that food from your diet for a full week to see if it makes a difference. If that simple at-home trial and error process doesn't work, and you have no clue what is causing the problems, then you could see a healthcare professional. There are blood tests you could take for food allergy and intolerance.

Rotation... I know one of the things Paul recommends is rotating your sources of protein to reduce the chance of overexposing yourself to any particular pesticide or heavy metal, especially the mercury in fish that are high on the food chain. That's something to think about, especially for bodybuilders and weight training enthusiasts who eat so much meat and tuna fish in particular.

Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables as well as other foods is good advice because you get a wider variety of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that way. Different kinds of fruits and veggies all have their own particular benefits. The different colors correlate with different phytonutrients, so varying the colors is also a good idea, such as red peppers, green beans, yellow squash, orange carrots and yams, and so on.

I've heard more than one source suggest that eating the same foods all the time can cause a food allergy. I'm no expert on food allergies, and I don't know what the scientific literature says about this, if anything, but my first thought here is that eating the same thing every day might *expose* or *aggravate* an existing allergy, but I don't see how it could cause one that wasn't there in the first place.

If that were true for all people all the time, then I would be allergic to eggs, chicken, oatmeal, yams, and other bodybuilding staple foods because I've eaten enough of those foods repetitively over the years to feed a small village. If you suspect an allergy or intolerance, you can use an elimination process to pull out the

suspected foods one at a time to see how you react. If no change, put it back and move to the next suspect.

Sleep? Sleep is for wimps. Just kidding. Actually I do sleep less than most people. I average six to seven hours and I thrive on it, but it's really high quality sleep. Sleep quantity is important, but so is sound, uninterrupted, high quality sleep.

Here are my top tips for sleep quality:

- Getting eight hours of quality sleep is a good guideline for most people and especially athletes, although some people seem to do very well with only six to seven hours of sleep if it is high quality sleep. There is definitely some individual variation in sleep needs.
- Go to bed early so you are sleeping when it's dark. Our bodies are in sync with daytime and nighttime cycles. There's an old proverb that each hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after.
- Maximize daytime hours awake and nighttime hours asleep. This is in alignment with our body's hormonal and circadian rhythms.
- Make sure it's totally dark in your bedroom. When light hits your eyes, your body thinks it's daytime and can release cortisol and stress hormones associated with normal daytime activities while suppressing melatonin.
- Establish a regular schedule of going to bed at the same time every night because your body can train itself to prepare for sleeping and waking at those times.
- Avoid caffeine and other stimulants in the afternoon and evening because it activates your sympathetic nervous system and disrupts your sleep cycle. If you drink coffee, keep it in moderation and drink it in the morning.
- Do not drink alcohol right before bed.
- Stay on a regular exercise schedule because that can help you sleep better, but avoid intense exercise late at night as that may keep you awake and disrupt your sleep cycle.
- Keep stress to a minimum.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** What are some of the worst fad diets you have ever had the displeasure of reading about? And how would you suggest that consumers protect themselves from becoming victims?

**TOM VENUTO:** I can't think of one diet in particular, but in general, the diet claims that really give me the most displeasure are the ones promising super fast weight loss. Just yesterday I saw on the cover of a magazine, "The Weekend Diet: Be 10 Pounds Lighter by Monday." Just another new twist on the same old theme—it never ends. Abs in seconds, muscles in minutes, 30 pounds in 30 days, 11 pounds every nine days, and on and on it goes.

These kinds of quick fix diets are the ones that irk me the most because they're being put out by people who claim to be in our industry to help others, but they're only helping perpetuate the problem. They're definitely not part of the solution.

The solution is education. Professionals who are committed to serving people and telling the truth need to step up and explain that it's important to lose weight slowly, to work hard, to be patient, and then you will get results that last for life.

I'm not sure how much difference it's making, but government agencies are also trying to help. A couple years ago, the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which is the watchdog agency that monitors deceptive advertising, published their new *Red Flag* brochure. It was created to help people on both sides—advertisers and consumers—screen out bogus weight loss claims for nonprescription drugs, supplements, creams, wraps, devices, and patches.

The FTC listed seven bogus claims that should raise red flags because scientific evidence doesn't support them. This is a pretty good list, and you'll be surprised how many products and diets get knocked off the chart if you go by this list.

1. Causes weight loss of two pounds or more per week for a month or more without dieting or exercise.
2. Causes substantial weight loss no matter what or how much you eat.

3. Causes permanent weight loss even when you stop using the product.
4. Blocks the absorption of fat or calories to enable you to lose substantial weight.
5. Safely enables you to lose more than three pounds per week for more than four weeks.
6. Causes substantial weight loss for all users.
7. Causes substantial weight loss by wearing it on your body or rubbing it onto your skin.

The reason companies get away with these claims is because the FTC just can't keep up with them all, especially today when a company can set up shop on the Internet, then close down and start up all over again under a different name. But the big ones get caught when they become visible enough in the marketplace.

The companies that are getting away with promoting and advertising fast weight loss and these other bogus claims are causing some serious problems. It makes it really hard to educate people when we're up against these advertising messages that bombard everyone all day long. As the FTC says in their report, "Fast and easy fixes undermine the reality of what it takes to lose weight. People are buying empty promises."

Quick fix promises also cause unrealistic expectations. I got an email from a subscriber who read one of my recent newsletters titled, "Don't be a big loser," where I basically said, "shame on you" to these makeover and weight loss reality TV shows for causing unrealistic expectations, and he totally wouldn't buy it. He kept talking about the guys on TV losing 20 pounds a week and the people he knew going on low carb diets losing 10–15 pounds in the first week, and he said he was hell bent on losing at least five pounds a week, so when I said two pounds a week and definitely no more than three, my words were falling on deaf ears.

Here's the link for the *Red Flag* brochure and other FTC materials. I'd recommend everyone read this and take it to heart. It's not just some boring government document—this is the truth about weight loss.

**Federal Trade Commission Press Release:**

<http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2003/12/weightlossrpt.htm>

**FTC's *Red Flag* brochure** (11 pages, free download):

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/redflag/index.html>

**Deception in weight loss advertising workshop** (74 pages, free download):

<http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/12/031209weightlossrpt.pdf>

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** What role has the Internet had in this proliferation of false claims? How useful is the well meaning information found on the Internet with regard to nutrition, supplementation, and medical information?

**TOM VENUTO:** The Internet is an incredible technology, an incredible educational tool, and an incredible opportunity, but unfortunately, opportunities attract opportunists. There are pros and cons to the Net both for consumers and business owners.

If you don't know what to look for when you're surfing for information, for example, if you're not familiar with the red flags, there's no way you can tell who is well meaning and who is an opportunist out to make a quick buck. The sheer volume of web pages can also be major information overload for a beginner.

The upside of the Internet is that people like you and me can get online and publish the truth about diets, weight loss, and fitness training without being edited, screened, or censored. It's a platform that allows true freedom of speech. In online publishing you're not influenced by the advertising dollars that are necessary in print publishing to keep magazines in circulation.

The downside of the Internet as a source for health and fitness information is that there is no barrier to entry whatsoever. Any scam artist or ignoramus can start a website and have it online five minutes from now and start selling anything and saying anything he wants.

There is so much good information on the Net now, so many great resources, so many awesome communities, and so many ways to

connect with like-minded people for support and information, that it pays to learn use the Net. But unless you want to be misinformed and misled, you have to educate yourself about how to educate yourself online! Learn about those red flags, and remember that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** We've been focusing mostly on fat loss and getting great abs, but before we wrap up, let's look at the other side of the coin—gaining muscle. Of all the nutritional supplements on the market, which one is the best for gaining muscle?

**TOM VENUTO:** *Food!* Food, food, food! I don't recommend supplements for gaining muscle mass unless I know a client is doing everything right in their training and in their diet, eating whole foods first. I just can't emphasize that enough. There's no quick fix for losing weight and there's none for gaining muscle either.

Get your diet in order before considering any supplements outside of essential vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids. It's calories combined with progressive resistance training that makes you gain mass, not supplements.

However, if supplements let you get the calories you need to gain weight, then powders, drinks, or other products that help you easily reach your necessary calorie intake can be very valuable. That can include well-formulated weight gain drinks, protein powders and drinks, post-workout drinks, and various meal replacements. These products aren't magic, they are just supplemental to your food intake—think of them as powdered or liquid food—but they can definitely help with your calorie surplus.

Outside of calorie-containing weight gain supplements, creatine is definitely a winner, although I'll dare go out on a limb and say that even creatine is overrated and overhyped to some degree. Some people do seem to respond better than others though.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** One last question. Tom, I know you've had a lot of experience in the fitness industry, doing just about everything from being a bodybuilder, personal trainer, success coach, gym owner, and now health and fitness publisher. From all your experience combined,

what do you think is the one thing most needed to change a person's lifestyle and improve their health?

**TOM VENUTO:** A committed decision to reach a predetermined specific goal, combined with burning desire, followed by immediate, massive action repeated consistently for as long as it takes until your goal is reached.

**DAVID GRISAFFI:** That just about says it all. There's no quick fix to a lean body with great abs. It takes good information, focus, hard work, discipline, and persistence to reach your goals.

Well, Tom, that's about it. As always, you're a wealth of knowledge, and I know all our readers are going to benefit a lot from this information, as well as save a lot of money and frustration if they follow your advice. Thank you. ■

### About Tom Venuto



Tom Venuto is an NSCA-certified strength and conditioning specialist, lifetime natural bodybuilder, freelance writer, success coach and author of the #1 best-selling ebook ***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle (BFFM): Fat Burning Secrets of the World's Best Bodybuilders and Fitness Models***. He is also co-author of ***Fit Over 40; Role Models for Excellence at Any Age***.

Tom has written hundreds of articles and has been featured in *IRONMAN Magazine*, *Natural Bodybuilding*, *Muscular Development*, *Muscle-Zine*, *Olympian's News* (in Italian), *Exercise for Men* and *Men's Exercise*. Tom's inspiring and informative articles on bodybuilding, weight loss, and fitness motivation are featured regularly on dozens of websites worldwide. For information on Tom's ***Burn the Fat*** ebook, visit [www.BurnTheFat.com](http://www.BurnTheFat.com). To subscribe to Tom's free monthly e-zine, visit [www.TomVenuto.com](http://www.TomVenuto.com).

### About David Grisaffi



David Grisaffi has been a sports enthusiast his entire life. His love for sports led him into a career in sports conditioning and fitness training. David majored in physical education and holds multiple certifications including three from the prestigious CHEK Institute: Level II High Performance Exercise Kinesiologist, Golf Biomechanic, and Health and Lifestyle Counselor. He is also certified with the International Sports Sciences Association as a personal trainer and specialist in performance nutrition.

David was a high school wrestling and baseball coach and is currently an independent trainer and strength coach. He has been sought after by some of the top athletes in professional sports including world champion boxer Greg Haugen and professional golfer Michael Putnam.

David's ebook, ***Firm And Flatten Your Abs*** is an online bestseller that teaches you how to lose body fat, develop six-pack abs while improving strength, function, and athletic power. You can contact David or learn more about his programs at [www.FlattenYourAbs.net](http://www.FlattenYourAbs.net).

## ***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle by Tom Venuto***

***Why Is Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle the Best Selling Ebook in Internet History, with Thousands of Satisfied (and Now Fat Free) Users in 133 Countries from Algeria to Zimbabwe?***



***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle*** is the #1 best selling diet and fitness ebook in the history of the Internet. In fact, it's one of the best selling ebooks on *any* subject in the history of the Internet—and there's a reason why...

It's because thousands of women and men of every age are burning off *body fat*—not muscle or water weight—and they're doing it naturally, without supplements, pills, or “magic potions,” simply by using the proven, scientifically accurate and common sense advice found inside this amazing diet and fitness guidebook.

Tom Venuto, a respected fat loss expert, natural bodybuilder, and personal trainer, has not just pumped out yet another diet program into an already over-saturated market. Tom's ***Burn the Fat*** is more accurately described as a “Fat Loss Bible.” It is quite simply one of the most complete, detailed, and precise guides to fat loss you will ever read. What makes it so much different than other weight loss publications on the market?

Well first of all, it's not a weight loss program, it's a fat loss program. This may seem like semantics or wordplay at first, but once you've read just the first three chapters, there will be no doubt in your mind that pursuing weight loss is not only the wrong goal, it may be the reason that you've failed to reach and maintain your ideal body weight. ***Burn the Fat*** shows you exactly why it's fat you must lose, not weight (which includes muscle, water, and other lean tissue) and then goes on to show you exactly how to do it.

Secondly, what makes ***Burn the Fat*** different is the amount of attention that is paid to each and every element of successful, healthy, permanent fat loss. ***Burn the Fat*** not only thoroughly dispels the lies, myths, and fallacies surrounding a very confusing subject, it is simply the most detailed book about fat loss ever written. By reading ***Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle***, (or better yet, studying it), you will learn more about fat loss than you could from an entire semester of nutrition classes or from an entire shelf of mainstream diet publications at your local bookstore.

You may be wondering, “Is this a low carb diet? A high protein diet? A high fat diet? what type of program *is* it?” The truth is that ***Burn the Fat*** is neither a high protein diet, or a low

carb diet. That's because with the information in this book, you will be able to easily determine your own ideal protein, carbs, and fats ratio. You will be able to analyze your body type (are you an endomorph, ectomorph, or mesomorph?), you will determine your BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate, or the amount of maintenance calories your body requires every day), and you will discover whether you are carb tolerant or carb intolerant.

This personalized approach makes perfect sense because each of us is a unique individual, and no two people are exactly alike in terms of body physiology and personal goals.

One of the most powerful chapters in the book is the first one called, "How to Set Powerful, Compelling Goals That Will Propel You Forward and Charge You Up with Unstoppable Motivation." In this chapter, you will learn what is probably the ultimate secret to burning fat and getting in shape... and it has nothing to do with diets, supplements, or training programs. There's also a great quote in this chapter from the legendary Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi...

"The dictionary is the only place success comes before work. Hard work is the price we must all pay for success." This line does a nice job of expressing the "no quick fix" philosophy behind the entire book. In the rest of the book, you'll learn the complete and exact mechanics of fat loss—explained on both a scientific and a practical level (which you can easily apply in your own daily life in terms of what to eat and how to exercise to burn fat).

If there is any drawback to the *Burn the Fat* ebook, it's that it contains so much information that some readers may find it a bit overwhelming. Those who are looking for a CliffsNotes quick-start type of fat loss program, might be a bit intimidated at first. The good part, however, is that even these types of readers can feel confident and assured that it will be worth the effort because this will literally be the last book they ever have to buy on the subject.

Who will benefit most from *Burn the Fat*?

In the broadest sense, anyone and everyone who needs to lose weight will benefit from *Burn the Fat*. Men, women, bodybuilders, fitness enthusiasts, and especially motivated individuals and avid readers will love this book. Although it was written by a bodybuilder, this book is certainly *not* just for bodybuilders.

You will find no "30 pounds in 30 days" miracles at work here. It's all about intelligent eating choices, planning, hard work, and lifestyle change. As *Burn the Fat* author Tom Venuto says, "*Burn the Fat* is simple, but it's not easy."

In terms of graphic design, *Burn the Fat* is a clean and professionally formatted PDF ebook. It's a little on the plain side, being just text, but that makes it ideal for printing and reading in

the comfort of your favorite chair. Because of its size, it does require a robust printer and a good stack of paper.

Initially, some people thought that *Burn the Fat* was priced a little on the high side because \$39 might seem like a fair chunk of money for an ebook download. However, after they saw the amount of information contained within *Burn the Fat*'s 340 pages, along with the special bonus ebooks and reports that come with it, they said it was not only worth the \$39, but many times that amount.

As with any how-to publication, you're not really paying for the materials used to compile the document, but for what the information can do for you, and clearly, this publication has changed many lives, and the hundreds of testimonials and success stories found on the *Burn the Fat* website are proof of that. (I recommend you take a look at the testimonials page on the *Burn the Fat* website because some of the before and after transformations are simply incredible—as well as inspiring).

The bottom line?

Anyone looking for a quick fix solution to fat loss, anyone looking to be told fairy tales, and anyone looking for a “magic bullet” offered by the likes of body wraps, fat burning pills, diet shakes, or fat-burning creams and gels might be best advised to steer clear of *Burn the Fat*.

On the other hand, anyone tired of spinning their wheels, going nowhere, who wants the truth about fat loss and who is ready and willing to put in the hard work and discipline and make the lifestyle changes necessary to get a fat free body, will find *Burn the Fat* to be one of the best investments they ever made in their lives. Click here to learn more about Tom Venuto's *Burn the Fat*:

**[www.BurnTheFat.com](http://www.BurnTheFat.com)**