

# Diet and Exercise

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## Diet

### Sinful and non-sinful fat levels

“Take from me the greediness of the belly, and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me.”  
(Ecclesiasticus 23:6)

It is a sin against the Fifth Commandment to be greatly or extremely over-fat or greatly or extremely under-fat (unless being under-fat is caused by illness or involuntary deprivation). The sin is venial or mortal depending on the level of harm to your health. I say over- and under-fat instead of over- and under-weight because a too high or too low fat percentage in the body, not weight, is what actually harms health.

The sin is venial for persons greatly over-fat (obese) or greatly and purposely under-fat because this greatly harms their health. The sin is mortal for persons extremely over-fat or under-fat because this extremely harms their health. However, there is no sin or fault for persons slightly over-fat because this does not harm their health but only hampers it. And there is no sin or fault for persons who are slightly under-fat, according to some charts, because this does not harm or hamper their health; and thus for the sake of this article, I place persons who fall into this category, according to some charts, in the normal category and thus the below chart does not have a slightly under-fat category.

### *The guilty must confess their sins and amend their life*

Dear reader, may the following not apply to you:

“And the wrath of God came upon them. And he slew the fat ones amongst them...”  
(Ps. 77:31)

Catholics who sincerely confess their venial or mortal sin for being greatly or excessively over-fat or under-fat are forgiven provided they have a firm purpose to lose or gain fat and actually set about doing it. Even though they will be for a while greatly or excessively over-fat or under-fat and thus be in the venial or mortal sin category, they are not guilty of venial or mortal sin as long as they continue to lose or gain fat to the point of being either in the normal-fat or slightly over-fat category.

Catholics who fall into the venial sin category of over- or under-fat are to be dealt with patiently because most Catholics are guilty of one venial sin or more. For example, a Catholic who is guilty of the venial sin of impatience is just as guilty as a Catholic who is guilty of venial sin for being greatly over- or under-fat. Just because the over- or under-fat sin is visible to all and thus cannot be hid does not make it a worse venial sin than the venial sin of impatience. In fact, it should be easier for the sinfully over- or under-fat person to confess and amend because his sin is always before him and before all men, every second of every day, and thus cannot be hid. As long as he does not fall into the mortal sin category, he is to be dealt with patiently and not put under a minor excommunication. He is to be dealt with patiently because Catholics who are guilty of only venial sins and faults are in a state of grace, in the way of salvation, and children of God, and thus are not children of the Devil. Whereas, Catholics guilty of mortal sins are not in a state of grace, not in the way of salvation, not children of God, but are children and slaves of the Devil and thus must be dealt with severely. However, Catholics in venial sin must confess their venial sin and work on overcoming it or else they will eventually fall into one mortal sin or another.

Catholics who fall into the mortal sin category of over- or under-fat and confess their sin can be given some time to lose or gain fat on their own, such as one month. If they are losing or

gaining a sufficient amount of fat (which is proof of their firm purpose of amendment), then Catholics must deal with them patiently since they are no longer guilty of sin for this reason as long as they continue to lose or gain fat to the point of being normal or slightly over-fat. If they do not begin to lose or gain a sufficient amount of fat in one month, then they do not have a firm purpose of amendment and thus remain guilty of mortal sin until they do and must be put under a minor excommunication and, if possible, put into a “fat farm” or monastery where they are monitored and forced to lose or gain fat.

Also beware of falling into heresy by saying that you cannot lose weight. The fact that very fat people have lost weight is one proof that all fat people can lose weight. Nature and common sense are another proof. If you were put into prison on a bread and water diet for a week or two, you would begin to lose weight. Or if someone deprived you of food altogether, you would rapidly lose weight to the point of being extremely thin and then emaciated and dead.

### *Catechumens*

Catechumens who are in the mortal sin category of under- or over-fat must not be allowed to enter the Catholic Church until they are at least in the venial sin category. However, they can enter the Catholic Church if they are in danger of death as long as they are sincerely working at losing or gaining weight so as to be no longer in the mortal sin category of under- or over-fat.

### **Fat levels affect health**

It is unhealthy to have too much or too little body fat. The body needs some fat to be healthy and survive and thus it is unhealthy to be greatly or extremely under-fat. If being under-fat is voluntary, then sin is committed. There is no involuntary way of being greatly or extremely over-fat unless by force feeding.

The health of persons greatly over- or under-fat is greatly harmed. And the health of persons extremely over- or under-fat is extremely harmed. However, the health of those slightly over-fat is not harmed but only hampered. A slightly over-fat person would feel better at the normal-fat level.

Several serious illnesses are caused in those who are greatly or excessively over-fat or under-fat. A good doctor will tell those who fall into these categories that the loss or gain of fat will cure these illnesses (such as high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes for those who are greatly or excessively over-fat). And he will tell them that the loss or gain of fat will make them much healthier and much stronger.

Because Catholics do not idolize health or the body, not every person has to be perfectly physically fit. Hence persons who are slightly over-fat do not have to attain normal weight if they do not want to. Hence beware of some doctors or others who want every person to be a specimen of perfect physical fitness. Catholics must not be health nuts. That is not to say that everyone who is perfectly physically fit is a health nut but only the physically fit who believe that everyone who is not like them is weak, sinful, or inferior.

### **All foods are good in moderation**

Therefore the over or under intake of food is sinful and unhealthy but not the food itself. Hence all foods (such as red meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, coffee, tea, fruits, candy, desserts, chocolate, milk, cheese, and alcohol) are good in proper measure:

“Go, eat fat meats and drink sweet wine, and send portions to them that have not prepared for themselves: because it is the holy day of the Lord, and be not sad, for the joy of the Lord is our strength.” (2 Esd. 8:10)

“Do you not understand, that whatsoever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the privy? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man.” (Mt. 15:17-18)

St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 397-402: “It is not the uncleanness of meat that I fear, but the uncleanness of an incontinent appetite. I know that permission was granted Noe to eat every kind of flesh that was good for food; that Elias was fed with flesh; that John, blessed with a wonderful abstinence, was not polluted by the living creatures (that is, the locusts) on which he fed. And I also know that Esau was deceived by his hungering after lentils and that David blamed himself for desiring water, and that our King was tempted not by flesh but by bread. And thus the people in the wilderness truly deserved their reproof, not because they desired meat but because in their desire for food they murmured against the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 395: “We must, therefore, consider carefully what is suitable to times and places and persons, and not rashly charge men with sins. For it is possible that a wise man may use the daintiest food without any sin of epicurism or gluttony, while a fool will crave for the vilest food with a most disgusting eagerness of appetite. And any sane man would prefer eating fish after the manner of our Lord, to eating lentils after the manner of Esau, or barley after the manner of oxen. For there are several beasts that feed on commoner kinds of food, but it does not follow that they are more temperate than we are. For in all matters of this kind it is not the nature of the things we use but our reason for using them, and our manner of seeking them, that make what we do either praiseworthy or blameable.”<sup>2</sup>

## **A good diet and exercise**

A good diet and exercise are necessary to lose or gain fat and become healthy or to maintain your fat level and health if your fat percentage is normal or slightly over-fat. A good diet consists of an acceptable calorie intake and a healthy balance of foods, such as meats, fish, vegetables, bread, milk, milk products, sweets, fruits, etc. You do not have to eat all of these types of food, but a certain balance of essential foods is necessary. All of your calories must not come from one kind of food. And some foods (such as sweets) must be taken in a minimal amount; hence these kinds of food are good or acceptable in minimal amounts but harmful in medium or large amounts. A candy bar can contain as many calories as a big piece of meat or a big bowl of soup. You can still eat the candy bar or other sweets and it would even be good for you but only if you eat a minimal amount compared to the other foods you eat during the day.

If you are maintaining an acceptable weight and health without counting calories and according to your current eating habits, then you can continue to eat without counting calories or monitoring a balanced diet. But if not, then you must count calories and make sure you eat a balanced diet. As you get older your metabolism slows up and thus you gain fat more easily and lose muscle mass. Hence it may become necessary for you to count calories and do sufficient exercise to maintain muscle mass with the additional benefit of burning calories. On days when you eat a big meal and it is not possible to count calories, you can simply note that you ate a big meal that day and make up for it on the following day or days by eating less than your normal daily calorie intake.

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<sup>1</sup> b. 10, c. 31, par. 46.

<sup>2</sup> b. 3, c. 12, par. 19.

There are certain natural and healthy foods (such as green tea) that burn calories and somewhat suppress the appetite. However, beware of any quick-fix methods to lose fat and maintain health. The only safe and permanent way is by counting calories, eating a balanced diet, and exercising sufficiently. Some tips on counting calories are that pickles and cabbage have zero calories. And beer puts on much more weight than wine or hard liquors. Those who drink a lot of beer are known to have “beer bellies,” while wine and hard liquor drinkers are generally thin. I am not saying that you cannot drink beer, but moderate it and drink wine or hard liquor more often.

During the fasting seasons of Advent and Lent, you are required to lose weight by the mere fact that you are fasting for a long period of time. But you must not lose so much weight as to fall into the sinfully under-fat categories. And when you go back to the feasting seasons, you are required to gain weight by the mere fact that you are feasting for a long period of time. But you must not gain so much as to fall into the sinful over-fat categories. Therefore, if you are fasting and feasting properly, your weight will fluctuate.

Alcohol is a good and healthy thing that God has given men to enjoy but not to get drunk:

“Wine was created from the beginning to make men joyful, and not to make them drunk.” (Eccus. 31:35)

Hence wine taken in moderation is good but taken to get drunk is a mortal sin.

Tobacco is another good thing God has given men to enjoy in moderation. Hence smoking cigars, pipes, or cigarettes is good in moderation. But smoking to an excess so as to harm the health is a sin, venial or mortal depending upon the extent that it harms the health. A smoker must also be considerate and thus not smoke in the company of people who are bothered by the smoke. If he is not considerate, then he sins either venially or mortally depending upon the extent and duration of his purposely smoking in the presence of people who he knows are bothered by the smoke.

Beware, then, of some doctors and others who condemn sweets, alcohol, caffeine, and smoking as something intrinsically un-healthy. There are testimonies of old men in their nineties who from their early ages drank alcohol and smoked in moderation every day.

### **Body fat and not weight is what matters**

The most accurate way to determine if your diet is acceptable is by measuring your Body Fat Percentage (BFP). Body Fat Percentage is the total amount of body fat divided by total body weight listed as a percentage. For example, a 180 lb. man with 30 lb. of body fat has a fat percentage of 16% (30/180).

The standard chart that measures body fat percentage according to weight and height, called the Body Mass Index (BMI), is not accurate. A person could be considered obese according to the BMI but is actually not because the fat percentage in his body is normal compared to his muscle, bone, and other body parts. This is true especially of athletes (such as football players and wrestlers) who lift weights and thus have a high percentage of muscle and little fat even though the BMI says that they are obese (greatly over-fat) or excessively obese (extremely over-fat) while in truth they are very healthy, strong, and fit. And a thin person can be “skinny fat,” which means his muscle mass is below average and thus much of his weight is due to fat; therefore, even though the inaccurate BMI says his weight is normal, the accurate BFP says he is over-fat. When people lose weight, the first thing lost is muscle. Hence when losing weight, it is important to exercise in order to maintain a good muscle-to-fat ratio. That is why a good diet and sufficient exercise (which strengthens, increases, or maintains muscle) are both important to maintain a healthy body.

The most accurate way, then, to know if you are under- or normal- or over-fat is what I call the flab or blubber index, which is the same as the actual fat percentage in the body, not the BMI's estimated percentage according to height and weight.

There are several kinds of fat in the body (such as white fat and brown fat). And fat is located in two places in the body: under the skin (known as subcutaneous fat) and surrounding the internal organs (known as visceral fat). High levels of visceral fat are more dangerous to health than high levels of subcutaneous fat. While you can have a normal or slightly high level of overall fat in your body, you can have a greatly or extremely high level of visceral fat, which would place you in the venial or mortal sin category. Hence it is more accurate to measure both the overall fat percentage in your body and the visceral fat percentage in your body to determine if you are in the venial or mortal sin categories. To lower visceral fat, you must cut down on your sugar and carbohydrate intake and must exercise.

### **Methods of measuring body fat**

While it is easy by sight to identify those who are very excessively over-fat, it is not so easy to identify those who are borderline between greatly and extremely over-fat and between slightly and greatly over-fat. The same applies to the under-fat categories. And it is not possible by sight to measure the visceral fat percentage. There are several ways to measure body fat. I will only mention three:

#### *Hydrostatic weighing*

The most accurate method is hydrostatic weighing, or underwater weighing. Hydrostatic weighing is the submerging of an individual into a water tank and onto an underwater scale to measure how much water his body displaces and how much he weighs under water. It is important that the subject being tested eliminates all air from his lungs, as well as any air trapped in his swimsuit or hair. Air changes how much water is displaced, so having excess air in or on the body will reduce the accuracy of the test. The amount of water displaced is equivalent to the test subject's body volume. The subject's underwater weight is put into an equation along with his body volume and out-of-water weight to calculate body density. Body density can then be used to calculate an estimated body fat percentage.

#### *DEXA scan*

The next most accurate method is a DEXA scan. While it is not as accurate as the Hydrostatic method in overall muscle to body fat percentage, it measures visceral fat and shows the location of fat throughout the body. However, both of these methods are expensive and not readily accessible.

#### *BIA scales*

The most accurate, inexpensive, and readily accessible method is a BIA scale. BIA (bioelectrical impedance analysis) scales use electrodes to transfer a very low-level electrical current through the skin and into the underlying body tissue. The sensors then measure how much the body tissues resist the current. This data is used to estimate the total amount of water in the body, which in turn is used to estimate fat-free mass, and by extension, body fat percentage. BIA scales are not as accurate as the above mentioned methods but are accurate enough. The one we

use at Mary's Little Remnant is Omron's *Full Body Sensor Body Composition Monitor and Scale*, which costs \$75.

If the BIA scale places you in a mortal sin category and you believe it may not be accurate, you can (and should if you can afford it and have access to it) go to a qualified person to measure your body fat percentage either by hydrostatic weighing or a DEXA scan.

### Record-Keeping and Body-Fat Percentage Charts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ M/F: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Date															
Day															
Time															
Notes															
Weight															
BMI															
BFP															
SMP															
RM															
BA															
VFL															
BM															

Date															
Day															
Time															
Notes															
Weight															
BMI															
BFP															
SMP															
RM															
BA															
VFL															
BM															

**BMI** = Body Mass Index; **BFP** = Body Fat %; **SMP** = Skeletal Muscle %; **BA** = Body Age; **VFL** = Visceral Fat %; **BM** = Bone Mass; **Notes: HB** = Hot Bath; **BM** = Big Meal

Fatness	Total Body Fat Percentages					
	Males			Females		
	Age 20-39	Age 40-59	Age 60-79	Age 20-39	Age 40-59	Age 60-79
Extremely under-fat (mortal sin category)	< 2%	<3%	< 4%	< 4%	< 5%	< 6%
Greatly under-fat (venial sin category)	2%	3 to 5%	4 to 7%	4 to 9%	5 to 11%	6 to 12%
Normal-fat (no sin category)	3 to 19%	6 to 21%	8 to 24%	10 to 32%	12 to 33%	13 to 35%
Slightly over-fat (no sin category)	20 to 24%	22 to 27%	25 to 29%	33 to 38%	34 to 39%	36 to 41%
Greatly over-fat (venial sin category)	25 to 33%	28 to 37%	30 to 39%	39 to 48%	40 to 49%	42 to 51%
Extremely over-fat (mortal sin category)	> 33%	> 37%	> 39	> 48%	> 49%	> 51%

G	Age	Skeletal Muscle Percentages			
		Low	Normal	High	Very High
M	18-39	<33.3	33.3-39.3	39.4-44.0	>44.0
	40-59	<33.1	33.1-39.1	39.2-43.8	>43.9
	60-80	<32.9	32.9-38.9	39.0-43.6	>43.7
F	18-39	<24.3	24.3-30.3	30.4-35.3	>35.3
	40-59	<24.1	24.1-30.1	30.2-35.1	>35.1
	60-80	<23.9	23.9-29.9	30.0-34.9	>34.9

Visceral Fat Percentages	
<13	Normal (no sin category)
13-16	Slightly high (no sin category)
17-29	Greatly high (venial sin category)
>29	Extremely high (mortal sin category)



### Daily Calorie Intake

Record total calories and fat calories for each meal with abbreviated description of the meal; end with + if another meal follows; end day with Total Daily Calorie count.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Calories and Description</b>	<b>TDC</b>

## Exercise

“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”  
(Mark 14:38)

Part of the Fifth Commandment is taking care of your physical body. A man cannot do his daily duty and good works no matter how much he desires unless he has the physical strength to do so. A major part of keeping a body healthy is physical exercise. Aerobic exercises and muscle-building or muscle-maintenance exercises are mandatory. If your daily duty does not include physical exercise or enough physical exercise, you must then do physical exercises at least three times a week. Younger persons can do more than older persons. Some examples of physical exercises are as follows:

- Running or walking at least one mile
- Riding a moving or stationary bicycle for at least fifteen minutes
- Doing stretching exercises, jumping jacks, squats, sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups
- Lifting weights, such as dumbbells
- Taking a steam bath, hot bath, or sauna, which is very good for sweating and thus burning calories and cleaning out and stimulating the body

Unless you are training for sports or combat, you do not have to overexert yourself. If you try to do too much, you may not be able to bear it and thus will quit. And it may even hurt you. You only need to do enough for minor exertion, and this will still be greatly beneficial for your body and stamina. Even if you are laid up in bed, you can still do some exercises with the parts of your body that can move.

*For the glory of God, the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints,  
and the salvation of men.*

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