

## How to Bring out Cuts and Definition

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Visible muscle definition is the holy grail of physique development. But for many regular exercisers, no matter how much they exercise, they simply cannot get the kind of defined “cuts” that they seek, nor shed that layer of subcutaneous water beneath their skin. So what gives?

Unfortunately those elusive cuts spring up only after a variety of factors are in place including optimal body composition, correct training and balanced, hypoallergenic nutrition for fat-loss. What many people miss is that the toned appearance of muscle is more of a result of diet than exercise. Even for someone whose body fat percentage is normal or even low, the foods they put in their bodies may be preventing them from seeing any chisel or cuts.

First and foremost, visible definition will not occur without a low enough body fat percentage. For women, this will most likely be below 20% and for men, below 15%. Reducing overall body fat through consistent fat-loss exercise and correct nutrition will help get your physique in the ballpark where visible muscle separation and tone is possible, but from there, it is all about the details.

### Exercise for more muscle, less fat

Decreasing body fat alone will not suffice, since taking someone with very little muscle to begin with and getting them leaner will simply make them look skinny and gaunt. Thus, the first goal is to maximize muscle building, while reducing body fat to make muscles pop.

To begin, step off the cardio machines and into the weight room for a fat-blasting strength circuit. Circuit training requires the exerciser choose 2-4 exercises and perform 1 set of each in a rotation, rather than performing the same exercise in straight sets. By moving from exercise to exercise with little rest time in circuit fashion, the heart rate and breathing remain elevated, while eliciting spikes of metabolic failure (burn in the muscles) throughout. Choose challengingly heavy weights so that failure or near-failure is reached on every set.

Try the following strength circuit to build muscle, while decreasing body fat. Move from one exercise to the next in a circuit, resting as little as is needed. This type of workout will elicit a strong cardiovascular response but also signal the release of key fat-burning hormones like growth hormone and testosterone.

Exercise	Weight	Reps
Incline Chest Press	Heavy	10
Bent-over Row	Heavy	10
Bench Step-ups	Medium (hold in hands)	10 ea leg
Squat Jumps	Light (hold in hands)	15

In addition to weight-training, perform short-duration, high-intensity cardio intervals to help keep the metabolism revved and also hang onto precious muscle. Interval training, which alternates working segments of high-intensity (such as sprinting) with resting segments of low intensity (like walking), is superior for fat burning over steady-state aerobic exercise and also spares muscle by burning

mostly sugar during exercise and fat post-exercise. To perform interval training, choose your favorite cardio machine. Rotate doing 1 minute at a very high intensity to get breathless and burning by the end, followed by 1 minute at a recovery pace to bring the heart rate and breathing back down. Alternate these 1-minute bouts to complete a total of 20 minutes. Keeping your interval workout short will ensure the greatest exertion.

### **Eating for fat and water loss**

First, clean, hypoallergenic eating will ensure the greatest chance of revealing muscle definition. Hypoallergenic means choosing foods that are not likely to produce an allergic response in the body (e.g. many people who eat dairy-containing products elicit an inflammatory response that presents in gastrointestinal upset).

Common culprits of food-induced allergic reaction (inflammation) in the body include dairy products, gluten-containing foods like grains, soy, animal protein high in saturated fat, sugar alcohols and artificial sweeteners. Though consuming them may not always lead to gastrointestinal upset, they in effect may cause a small (or large, depending on your specific sensitivity) inflammatory response in the body, one result of which is water retention.

Specifically, grains and dairy both induce the release of the hormone insulin, whose main job is to shuttle excessive blood sugar into the liver and muscle tissue for storage. Insulin also exerts a regulatory effect on sodium reuptake in the kidneys, causing an increase of sodium in the blood stream. A relative increase in sodium in the blood will trigger certain other hormones that cause an increase in water retention to balance the ratio of water-to-sodium in the blood.

And so the cycle continues of water and sodium retention feeding into one another, induced by insulin. Thus, one key way to shed water is to limit the amount of insulin-inducing foods we consume.

For example, the above mechanism is responsible for the initial water loss associated with the implementation of diets like the Paleodiet or the Atkins diet, both of which are lower in carbohydrates, and thus require less insulin release. Followers of these diets usually report a large water loss within the first week, and as a result, more visible muscle definition.

Sodium consumption itself is excessive in the US, and drastically increases water retention. Be vigilant in your choice of foods, taking into account not only total sodium, but also the sodium/potassium ratio. These two electrolytes balance one another in a sense so choose foods that are higher in potassium and lower in sodium. Sodium is prominent in many processed foods, which is why eating real, whole foods is always superior in terms of preventing water retention, among other reasons.

### **Drinking for fat and water loss**

We love diet drinks in the US. With no calories, sugar-free energy drinks, diet sodas, zero-calorie lemonades and coffee sweetener packets are a dieter's dream. Unfortunately the artificial sweeteners, preservatives like potassium benzoate and various electrolyte varieties like phosphoric acid that they contain can make a mess of our balanced blood solutes, and cause water retention in their minute inflammatory effects or electrolyte disruption, not to mention how they influence

other physiological factors. Many people who quit these drinks report a huge initial water loss, much of which is coming from the space under the skin where many hold excess water, leaving that smooth, bloated look.

Finally, if you want the body to release water, you have got to drink water. Though it sounds counter-intuitive, consuming at least 3 liters of water each day will help to shed water. Even though you might be running to the restroom more often, it is preferable since you are able to maintain an ideal blood-water volume, in effect optimizing electrolyte balance as well.

Though it may seem as though increasing muscle definition is a simple matter of getting leaner, that is only a piece of it. Diet choices can drastically impact your “look” in the direction of puffy or chiseled. Be vigilant in your food choices away from insulin-producing foods, sodium-laden processed products, and quit those diet drinks once and for all.