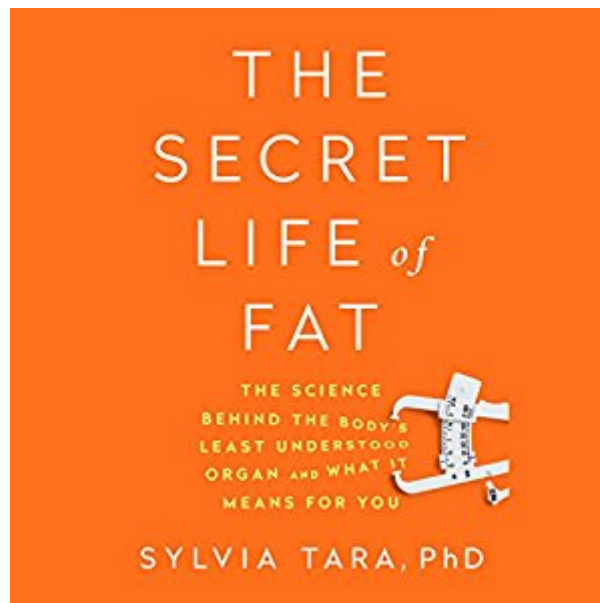




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The Secret Life Of Fat: The Science Behind The Body's Least Understood Organ And What It Means For You



Synopsis

Fat is an obsession, a dirty word, a subject of national handwringing - and, according to biochemist Sylvia Tara, the least understood part of our body. You may not love your fat, but your body certainly does. In fact your body is actually endowed with many self-defense measures to hold on to fat. For example, fat can use stem cells to regenerate; increase our appetite if it feels threatened; and use bacteria, genetics, and viruses to expand itself. The secret to losing 20 pounds? You have to work with your fat, not against it. Tara explains how your fat influences your appetite and willpower, how it defends itself when attacked, and why it grows back so quickly. The Secret Life of Fat brings cutting-edge research together with historical perspectives to reveal fat's true identity: an endocrine organ that, in the right amount, is critical to our health. Fat triggers puberty, enables our reproductive and immune systems, and even affects brain size. Although we spend \$60 billion annually fighting fat, our efforts are often misinformed and misdirected. Tara expertly illustrates the complex roles that genetics, hormones, diet, exercise, and history play in our weight, and The Secret Life of Fat sets you on the path to beat the bulge once and for all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title couldn't be more perfect. Fat is a universe unto itself, and we are only now discovering how it runs our bodies. The book is as dramatic as the title, and the chapters are filled with case studies of individuals and research findings, and both from all over the world. It is also very personal, inspired by Tara's own combat with fat. Informed by her own findings, she

beats her fat at its own game. Tara has a lovely description of fat: glucose is like cash, glycogen (chains of glucose) like a checking account, and fat is a certificate of deposit. There are three kinds of fat – white, beige and brown. White is the classic, energy store. Beige waits for signals to change to brown, which is saturated with mitochondria and burns energy instead of storing it. This, for obvious reasons, has become an obsession for research. -Like any other organ, fat will fight for life. Constant diet changing, losing and regaining a few pounds, only makes it tougher. It has the communication and receptor tools to keep itself in control. It manipulates the brain and participates in brain signals. -Fat signals the body for angiogenesis – it orders up new veins and arteries to approach it, in order to feed it, just like a tumor. -Fat knows when there is too much of it and signals the body to manufacture cytokines – inflammatories – the usual first line of defense. -Fat is an endocrine organ – it produces hormones (leptin) that latch onto the brain – hypothalamus and tell it to be hungry – or not. -By reducing leptin levels, remaining fat makes people feel hungrier than they were before reducing. -Fat circulates adiponectin which helps clear the blood – of fat. Those with high levels can be very fat and perfectly healthy. Hard exercise increases levels. -More than 50% of cells in the fat of the obese are immune cells, vs 5% in the fat of the normal or thin. -Fat resurges by lowering energy levels, so dieters have to work harder than normal to keep weight off. Only consistent, hard exercise overcomes the return of fat – even following liposuction. -Half a pound of fat can contain 50 million stem cells, used to rebuild muscle, bone and organs throughout the body. Doctors are quickly learning to repurpose them. -Hard exercise overcomes genetic predispositions to fat and weight in most cases. Chapter 8 is all about how women's bodies deal differently with fat. Their fat is a better kind (subcutaneous vs visceral), but there is more of it, and it takes them disproportionately more effort in the gym and less at the table to achieve the goals men see more easily. There is a fascinating analysis of sumo wrestlers, those hugely fat men whose sole job in life is to push other obese opponents out of the ring. The surprise is their blood levels are excellent, and they are extraordinarily healthy – as long as they keep to the training regimen and diet. Once they retire, they quickly slide into fat hell. Oddly, the chapter I was expecting – how do people with no fat and extreme, reduced calorie diets fare – is missing. In animal studies, such diets extend lifespans and energy levels dramatically. So is fat really necessary, or are we better off without it altogether? No mention in *The Secret Life of Fat*. Tara's book is a lovely combination of the emotional and the scientific, the personal and the universal, narrative and science. It is lean and muscled and terrifically readable. David Wineberg

Some interesting tidbits, but the author still doesn't quite yet completely understand how human metabolism and energy expenditure/conservation works. Some of the science in here is current and cutting edge, but some of it is the old calories in / calories out -- eat less / move more BS.

This is well written, realistic, and very informative. If you actually want to have some information about what is going on with body fat this is a great resource. It is not a diet book or even a fat loss strategy book. It is a "tell you how fat works" book. It gave me some insight into how the internal systems work with hormones and the other factors that I want to grasp better. I knew it was not always a simple in/out equation. Sound good? Then get the book. However, if you are looking for a quick fix to lose fat or something to tell you the "secret" then maybe get a book on Paleo, Whole 30, Atkins, Keto, or IIFYM. I'm sure there is one on the New York Times Best Sellers list each month.

This book opened my eyes to facts about fat that I had not run into any place else. I was still thinking of fat as just energy storage. The author here takes us on a journey (which reads easily as a narrative of discovery) through fat as an organ, as a participant in our hormonal system, and how our genes are involved. I felt that I got about as much science as a layman can reasonably handle, and I found the style of writing far more entertaining than I would expect in this type of book. I recommend this book if you want to go a little deeper into how your body operates. It opened some avenues of thought for me and got me out of some simplistic thinking.

Extremely informative - traces the history of studies done to discover causes of obesity/fat and how fat works. It covers each area of inquiry quite well. I really appreciate that this book is NOT just another, here's what you HAVE to do to lose weight, just do as I say. She leaves the issue of what YOU, as an individual, may need to do up - provides you with the information you need to try different things to discover what works for you and you get the sense that no matter how difficult it might be for some, it can be done!!! You better understand why some diets or techniques work for some and not for others. Well written.

This book is very enlightening. I had no idea there was so much information on what fat is, how it works, and how it can be managed. And the author writes well! The information is presented in an easy to read, story like fashion that kept me engaged, which can be tricky for a book like this. I really enjoyed reading it.

Very interesting and engaging book about fat, how it works, etc. A perfectly timed read as the family was starting on the road to eating better, exercising more, and generally trying to reduce weight for better health. Very important to know and understand the different types of fat; visceral, brown, white, etc.

I enjoyed this book. I thought I understood the biology of fat but I wasn't even in the ballpark. Our bodies are amazing and it should come as no surprise that every naturally occurring system in our bodies plays a role in maintaining these miraculous machines. Good read.

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