

Reasons Why the Scale Lies: A Brainless Box of Springs



It is important to ask yourself, “What are the circumstances during my weight check?” Your body holds a lot of water, you may feel bloated or just "squishy". I call it water renting space and it has nothing to do with fat. To truly gain a pound of fat in one day you'd have to eat 3500 calories above and beyond what your body needs. So if you need 2000 calories a day, you'd have to eat 5500 calories in one day! As you will see, it doesn't take much to retain a pound of fluid. The scale is an inanimate metal object with no soul. I prefer the Tanita® Body Fat Scale over other scales because it tells you your body fat and body water.

The following are reasons why the scale reads **higher** than we actually "own":

1. A very high carbohydrate day which doesn't have enough protein. A balance between carbs and protein helps prevent water retention. For every one gram of carbohydrate stored, 3 grams (cc's) of water are stored with it as part of the digestion process. The storage occurs in the stomach and intestines, which make your belly stick

out. Think of your intestines as an empty fire hose all folded up on a fire truck; it can't be folded up so nice when water is in it.

2. Too much sodium from Asian food, restaurant soups, and fast food.

3. PMS and ovulation (day 12-16 after last period started). Also note that during ovulation, your ligaments are more relaxed and need to be extra careful when working out or playing your sport. (up to 5 mm in the ACL!)

4. Sore muscles, or weighing in immediately after weight training. Your muscles are holding water and lactic acid.

5. Prescription (high-dose) anti-inflammatory medications like Ibuprofen/Motrin. These suppress prostaglandins (pain sensors) and cause kidneys to hold onto water.

- 200-400 mg = 1-3#
- 600-800 mg = 5#
- Includes inflammation, not just the drug.

6. If someone has a tendency to swell (arthritis, lupus), low barometric pressure, or spending time on an airplane, will increase swelling. When they say "It's going to rain, I can feel it in my knees" they're not kidding.

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7 and 8 are just gassy/bloaty- don't effect the scale- just clothes

7. Too many sugar free products containing sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, mannitol, and xylitol (notice the "ol"). these are found in sugar-free ice cream, frozen yogurt, candy, gum, mints, and now all the low carb protein bars. Too much of these particular artificial sweeteners can cause major bloating and other GI distresses. Look at carbohydrate part of the label.

8. Carbonated beverages and drinking from a straw can cause bloating too. Chewing gum can also do this. These foods and actions cause you to swallow more air.

Add a few of these factors together and the scale can "lie" as much as 5 pounds in one day. I have seen 20-pound fluid shifts in one week in extreme cases.



Reasons why the scale reads LOWER than what we actually "own":

You're just flirting with this weight because you're dehydrated. It doesn't show fat loss. You'd have to have a 3500-calorie deficit via food and exercise expenditure to truly lose one pound of fat.



1. A very high protein diet that has little carbohydrates. High protein diets are an extreme diuretic, which can lead to electrolyte imbalances, kidney problems, and calcium loss from bone. (Think as your bones as a bank....and you're hitting the ATM more than you're putting anything in.) These fad diets are temporary and dangerous. Eventually you start pulling the glycogen stores from your muscles too. Every one gram of glycogen lost also pulls 4 grams of water....ie muscles shrink and exercise is much tougher to do.

2. Recent fever or illness (sweating), however, every one degree above 100 increases metabolism by 7%.

3. Weighing in immediately after doing aerobic exercise. 1 cup of sweat weights 1/2 pound.