

**Fitness competitor Melissa Hall shows you how to whip your body back into shape in record time. by Leslie Gordon**

photographer Stewart Volland

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LAYOUT MICHAEL BLOT

# MAXIMUM

## FAT LOSS IN JUST 6 WEEKS

**S**pring is on the way and it's time to shape up, especially if what's left of that yuletide cheer is still hiding under your winter woolies. Just been waiting for the perfect workout? Then fitness star Melissa Hall has the solution. Her foolproof, accelerated plan is sure to blast off fat and get you fit in just six weeks.

And if you need a little extra inspiration, just look at this 5-foot-6 Minnesota native. Starring as one of Charlie's Angels at the Fitness America Pageant last November, the 29 year old wowed the crowd with her creative routine and fantastic physique. As a former cheerleader and beauty queen, Melissa knows how to look her best in a short amount of time. Read on to discover how you can get the same results from spring cleaning your diet to following Melissa's total body workout – and you don't even have to leave the house to do it.

### food basics

"The first thing you need to do is clean up your diet," says Melissa. "Avoid processed carbohydrates like bread, wheat-based products, and pasta." But that doesn't mean you avoid carbs altogether. Instead, make better choices, such as oatmeal, potatoes, and yams. These foods are less likely to cause water retention and will keep your blood sugar from spiking. Melissa also increases her protein intake, making sure to include one serving of about 21 to 25 grams with each meal. When she's dieting down for a competition, she eats four to six well-balanced meals with protein, carbs, and a small serving of "good" fat, like monosaturated fat. Every night she eats fibrous green vegetables to clean out her system and provide her with essential vitamins. And don't forget to drink up. "I have water bottles everywhere – in my car and two at my desk," she says. "I drink close to a gallon a day."

### routine rundown

Melissa's workout may not be what you'd expect from a seasoned fitness competitor. First, you can put those visions of long hours at the gym out of your mind because, according to Melissa, less is more. "One thing I've learned from the past is that when I over-train or do too much cardio and continue to eat a strict diet, it leads to other problems, like injuries, a weak immune system or just plain exhaustion," she says. Melissa recommends doing cardio two to three times a week for 40 minutes a session. "I really don't think you need to do too much cardio, especially if you're sticking to a clean diet. You don't want to burn so many calories that you're low on energy."

As for weights, Melissa uses three sets of light dumbbells (five, eight, and 10 pounds) to do a full-body workout two to three times a week. The exercises are effective, yet basic enough to do at home when she can't get to the gym. "You don't necessarily have to lift heavy weights, that's a misconception," she says. "You can do higher reps with lower weights to get a nice, lean physique."

### FULL BODY BLAST

Melissa does her cardio and strength workouts on separate days. She does 40 minutes of cardio three days a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and tries to vary her workouts with 20 minutes on the treadmill and 20 on the stationary bike or elliptical machine. On Tuesdays and Thursdays she does her total body workout and uses weekends as her rest days. The following is Melissa's total body workout. She recommends doing 15 reps of three to five sets of each exercise. Remember to rest and stretch your muscles for about 45 seconds between each set.

## standing lunge:

GLUTES AND QUADS

"My legs are one of the body parts I've always struggled with. Being a dancer, they have always had a straighter look and this exercise has helped to add definition." Melissa starts by holding a five-pound dumbbell in each hand. Stepping forward with her right foot and lifting the heel of her left foot off the floor, she gently bends into a lunge position, making sure to keep her body tall and her arms straight at her sides. Once her right thigh is parallel to the floor, she pauses, and then pushes back to the starting position before switching legs.

**Focus on Form:** To protect your lower back, make sure your knees don't travel past your toes.

## MEET MELISSA

- **WEIGHT:** 123lb contest, 127lb off-season
- **BODY FAT:** 10% contest, 14% off-season
- **RESIDENCE:** Minneapolis, MN
- **OCCUPATION:** Operations Manager, Fox Sports Net.
- **MARITAL STATUS:** Married trainer Jason Young in February.
- **CONTEST BACKGROUND:** Third in the 2002 Fitness America Pageant, seventh in the 2000 Fitness America Pageant and first in Miss Minnesota 2000
- **MOTIVATION:** "My mother. She was diagnosed with [breast] cancer about a year ago. I've just always looked up to her," says Melissa. "Just the strength I get from her, being able to battle and fight everyday, motivates me."
- **FAVORITE SPORTS FIGURE:** Serena Williams. "She has a great, athletic physique, while still being feminine. I like her strong-willed determination."
- **LITTLE KNOWN FACT:** Melissa is a former cheerleader for the Minnesota Vikings and Timber Wolves.
- **FAVORITE TV SHOW:** CSI
- **FAVORITE CHEAT FOOD:** Chicken fingers and fries.

A



B



## rocking horse:

ABS

Melissa learned this move from a former workout partner. She lies on her back and bends her left knee so that her foot is flat on the floor. Next, she extends her right leg straight up with her foot flexed. At the same time, she lifts her upper body off the floor and reaches up and forward towards her raised leg. She repeats in a continuous rocking motion, lifting her upper body off the floor and using her momentum to move her arms and raised leg towards each other, before lowering her body back to the floor. After 15 reps on one side, she switches legs to complete one set.

**Focus on Form:** The movement is slow and controlled. Think of bringing your ribs to your hips, and your hips to your ribs.

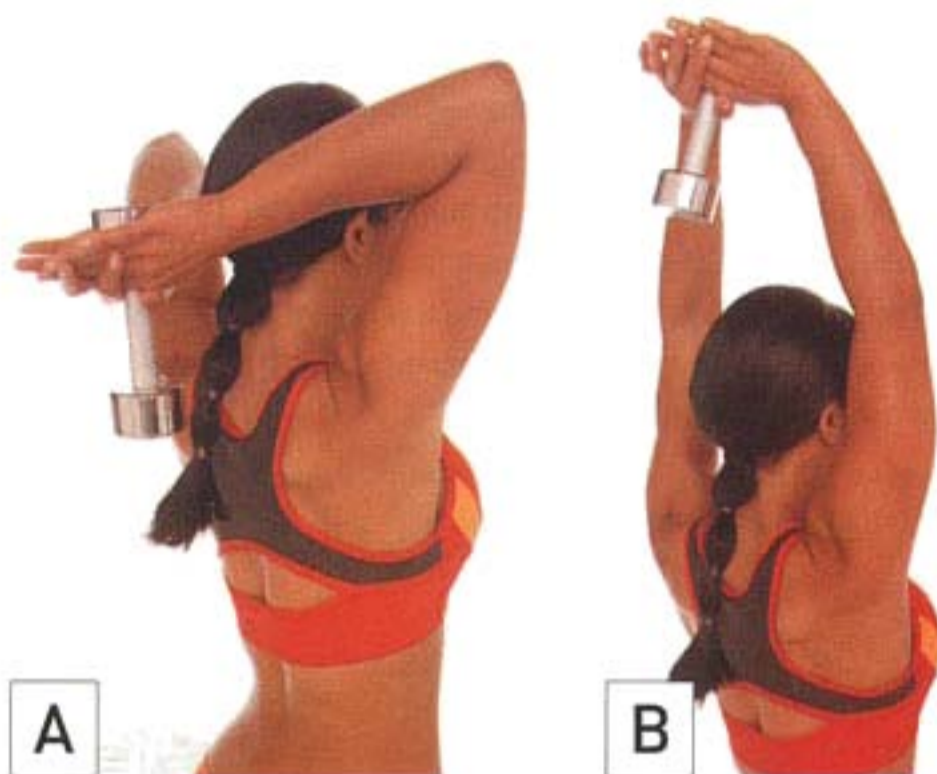
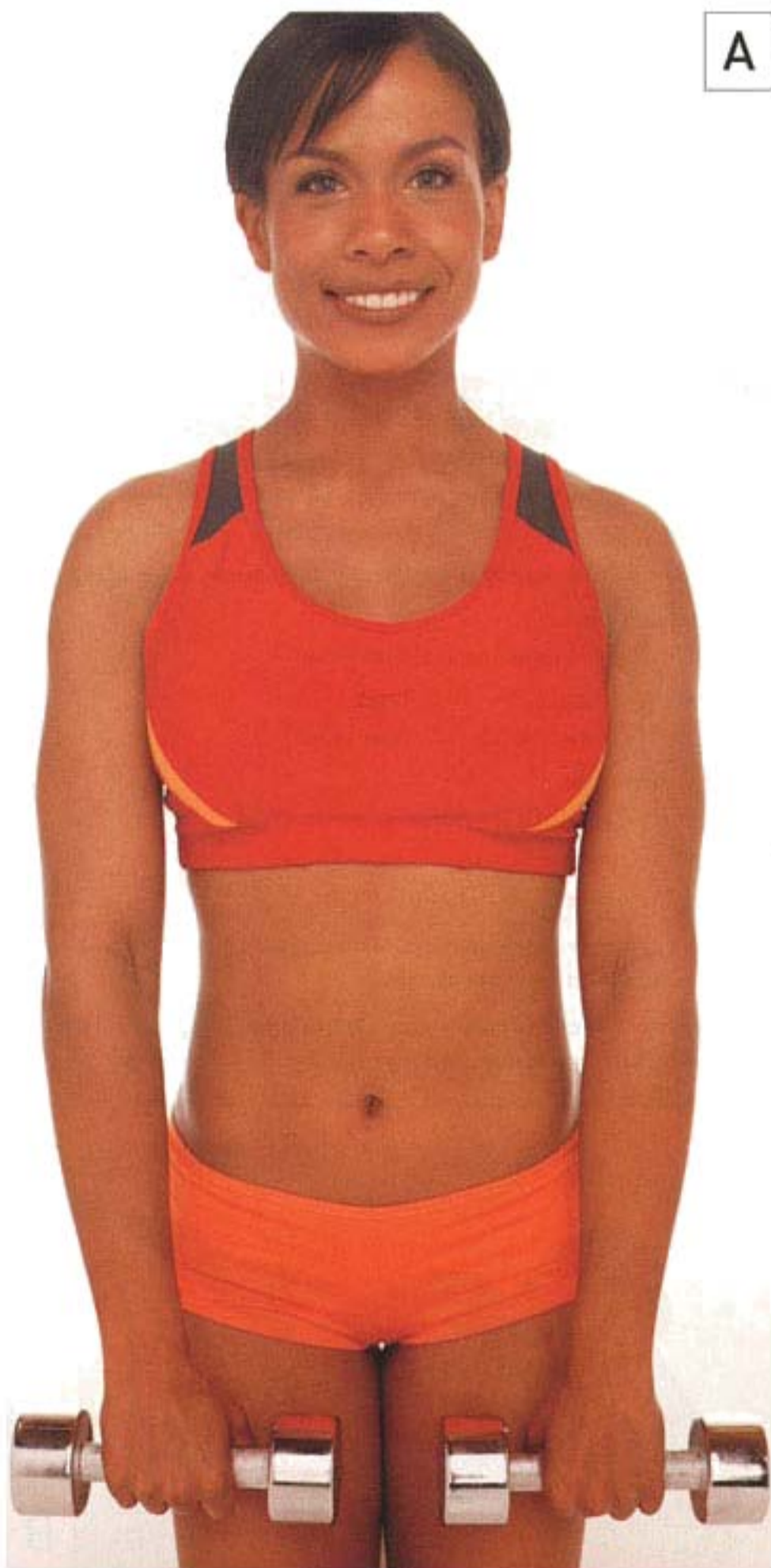


## upright row: ▼

### TRAPEZIUS, DELTS

Melissa likes this exercise because it's a great way to train her back and shoulders without going to the gym. To begin, she holds an eight-pound dumbbell in each hand with her palms facing in so that her knuckles touch her thighs. She exhales and gently lifts the weights up towards her chin, stopping when her hands come just under her shoulders. She pauses at the top, then slowly lowers to the starting position.

**Focus on Form:** It's important to keep the weights close to your body, says Melissa. This will ensure you're targeting the right muscles.

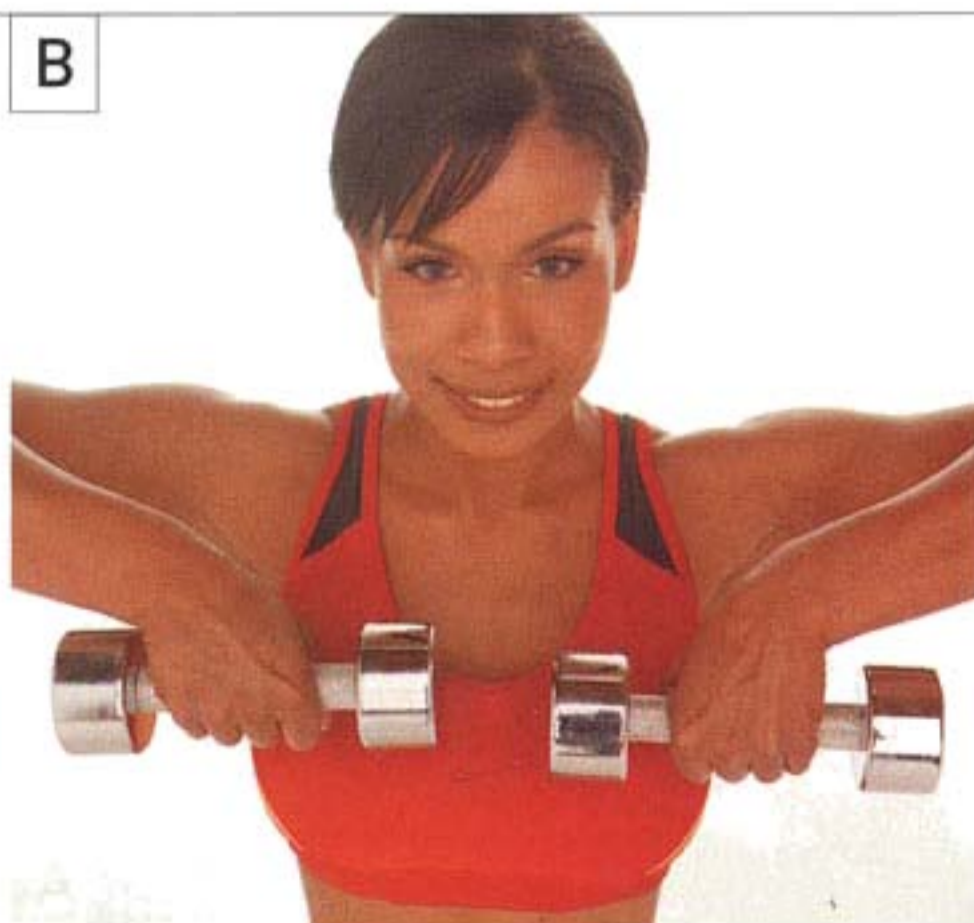


## overhead triceps extension: ▲

### TRICEPS

This is one of Melissa's favorite triceps exercises because it allows her to control her form and she can work both arms at the same time. Melissa holds a dumbbell with both hands, and bends her arms over her head. Standing tall with her feet firmly on the floor, she exhales and pushes the weight over her head, stopping just before she reaches full extension. After a short pause, she lowers the weight back down, making sure to keep her upper arms close to her head. Just before her forearms touch her biceps, she goes into another rep.

**Focus on Form:** Never lose control in your upper arms. They should remain close to your ear throughout the entire exercise.



## pushup: ▼ PECTS, DELTS, BICEPS

"This is a complete upper body workout," says Melissa. "Pushups give my shoulders a nice rounded look." To start off, Melissa kneels on the floor with her hands placed slightly wider than shoulder distance apart. Next, she extends her legs behind her, props herself up on her toes and keeps her head in-line with her spine. Exhaling, Melissa pushes off the floor until her arms are almost straight. She pauses at the top, and then slowly lowers her chest to the floor, stopping a few inches away. Once again she pauses, then goes on to the next rep.

**Focus on Form:** Keep your body rigid and avoid dropping your hips or using momentum to push yourself up.



## MELISSA'S SIX-WEEK FAST TRACK DIET

Here's a sample of Melissa's diet on a typical day, six weeks before a competition.

- **MEAL ONE:**  
Protein shake and a bowl of oatmeal with cinnamon and butter spray.
- **MEAL TWO:**  
Chicken breast with rice and green beans.
- **MEAL THREE:**  
Turkey burger with rice and a small salad.
- **MEAL FOUR:**  
Fish with a salad, a few rice cakes for crunch.
- **MEAL FIVE:**  
Protein shake before bed.

If she gets hungry on workout days, Melissa grabs a protein bar, making sure to choose one that's low in sugar and fat.

**Total Caloric Intake:** a minimum of 1,700 calories. (Keep in mind that Melissa's lean body mass is above average.)



## leg lift: ▼ HIP FLEXORS

"This exercise helps give my legs a toned look and brings out definition," explains Melissa. To begin, she lies on the floor so her left leg is on top of her right leg and her hips are stacked. Melissa bends her right knee, supports herself on her right elbow, and places her left hand in front of her body. Then she flexes her left foot and points her big toe to the floor. Exhaling, she slowly lifts her leg a few inches. Pausing at the top of the movement, she gently controls her leg back to the starting position. For this exercise, Melissa does four to five sets of 15 to 20 reps.

**Focus on Form:** Keep your hips square throughout the exercise.



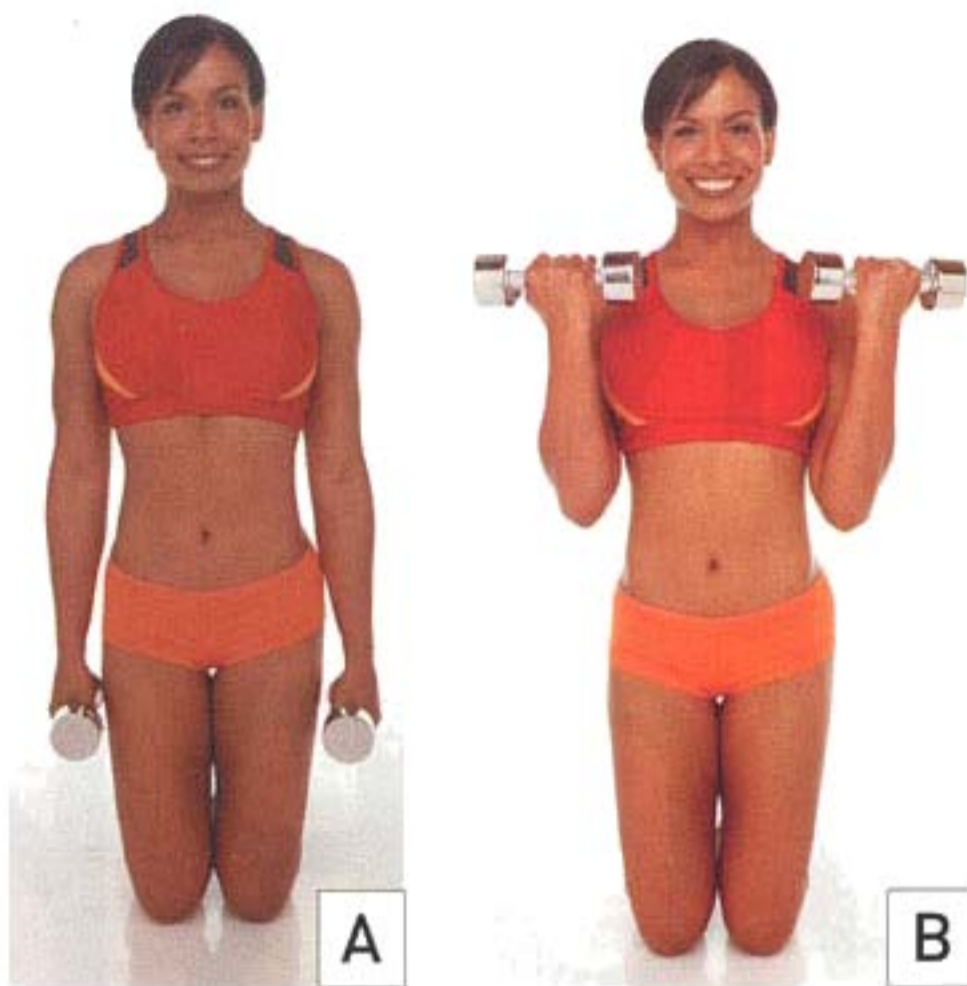


**calf raise:** ▲

**CALVES**

Melissa stands up straight with her feet together and her arms at her sides. She holds a dumbbell in each hand with her palms facing in. Keeping her body straight and her eyes facing forwards, she raises herself on her toes as far as possible, then returns to the start position. She does 15 reps of three to five sets.

**Focus on Form:** Do the exercise slowly and hold the position at the top to really feel the stretch in your calves.



**biceps curl:** ▲

**INNER BICEPS**

"One of the first things I notice on a person when they have a tank top on is whether they have nice tone to their shoulders and biceps. I think it makes a woman look fit and healthy." Melissa begins by kneeling with an eight-pound dumbbell in each hand. She extends her arms down by her sides, with her palms facing her thighs. Next, she flexes her biceps and curls the weights towards her chest, being careful to keep her elbows in contact with her body. She stops at the top, then gently returns to the start position.

**Focus on Form:** This exercise can be done with a dumbbell, ankle weights or anything else around the house. If you're starting to slack on form, pick up some lighter resistance.

**CUSTOMIZE YOUR DIET**

**HOW MANY CALORIES DO YOU NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT?**

According to sports nutritionist Mark MacDonald of Interfit in Venice Beach, CA, it's all about the math. Here's a standard formula for the average female:

(Body Weight Now) x 10 = (total calories per day)  
 eg. A 125-pound female  
 125 x 10 = 1250 calories

To find out how many calories you should be eating at one meal, just divide the total calories by the number of meals you're going to have. For five meals, here's the formula:

(total calories per day) / (number of meals) = (total calories per meal)  
 eg. 1250 / 5 = 250 calories a meal.

For the average female to lose weight, MacDonald recommends eating 50 percent carbohydrates, 30 percent protein, and 20 percent fat. This will keep your blood sugar stabilized and keep your muscles fueled.

**TO FIND OUT HOW MANY CARBS YOU SHOULD EAT:**

(total calories per meal) x .50  
 (answer) divided by 4  
 eg. 250 x .50 = 125  
 125/4 = 31 grams of carbs

**TO FIND YOUR RATIO OF PROTEIN:**

(total calories per meal) x .30  
 (answer) divided by 4  
 eg. 250 x .30 = 75  
 75/4 = 18 grams of protein

**TO FIND OUT HOW MANY GRAMS OF FAT YOU SHOULD EAT:**

(total calories per meal) x .20  
 (answer) divided by 9  
 eg. 250 x .20 = 50  
 50/9 = 5.5 grams of fat

**MAINTENANCE**

To maintain your weight, MacDonald recommends this standard formula for the average female:  
 (weight now) x 15 = (total calories a day to maintain weight)  
 (120) x 15 = 1800 calories a day to maintain