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Man v Fat

Written by Andrew Shanahan

Published by Headline

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MAN^vFAT

**THE WEIGHT
LOSS MANUAL**

MAN v FAT

THE WEIGHT LOSS MANUAL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Shanahan is an award-winning journalist and entrepreneur who runs the world's best free weight-loss magazine for men: www.manvfat.com.

From his work writing about food for the *Guardian* and being named one of the country's best young restaurant critics by the *Independent on Sunday*, weight has always been an issue. His recent experience of losing a lot of weight left him stunned about how little help is directed at men who are dieting. Consequently, he launched his new project - www.manvfat.com - to help normal blokes who simply want to win their own battle with fat. Launched after a successful crowdfunding campaign which drew support from Jamie Oliver amongst others, MAN v FAT seeks to inspire, motivate and educate men.

START SHEDDING POUNDS NOW →

ANDREW SHANAHAN

headline

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MAN v FAT site, Muna Regal and the Headline team.*

Dedicated to God. And to Emma, who is still waiting for her pink toilet.

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THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A PINK TOILET...



FOREWORD

Back in January of 2014 me and my wife Emma had saved up some money because she had her heart set on a toilet. She's fairly easy to please like that. Frankly, she deserved it. She's the only woman in a house full of men and, without going into too much detail, most of the time even I don't want to share a toilet with us. So she had it all planned, a little extension at the back of the house, a pink toilet, that expensive plush loo roll and absolutely no men allowed. Then MAN v FAT ruined everything.

In June of 2011 I was getting out of bed and I took a 'guttie' – a selfie of my naked gut. At that time I weighed the better part of 231lb (104.8kg). My Body Mass Index (BMI) was 34, I was obese. I had developed a heart rhythm problem due to my weight and I was stressed in my work. I could blame my career writing about food and reviewing restaurants for the likes of the *Good Food Guide*, the *Guardian*, *Time Out* and *Metro*, but the honest truth is I would have figured out a way to get fat regardless of what my job was. I ate crap, drank lager to de-stress and got marginally less exercise than a high-security prisoner in solitary confinement.

The result was the sort of gut that spilled out over my belt, a belly-button you could pothole in and man-boobs that would have driven a 12-year-old girl wild with jealousy. Initially I took the guttie to send to a mate to make him laugh (that's normal, isn't it?) but there was something about the image that made me stop in my tracks. The thing was that as I looked at it I just didn't see me. I saw someone fat and old and miserable. Where was the man who had things he wanted to do? Where was the dad who wanted to run around with his children? Where was the husband who wanted to be attractive to his wife, or at the very least not to nauseate her. Where was I? That guttie provided the shock I needed. I knew I was going to change. I put aside my pride and started to look for help on losing weight.

What I was about to find out was a shock. You see, as a man, the dieting industry had turned its back on me. Despite being desperate for information and support, it turned out that dieting was strictly for women only! How do I know? I know because I read the diet magazines that showed me bikinis that would flatter my figure on the beach this season. I went and sat as the only bloke in the weight-loss groups

and listened for an hour about how my period would cause bloating. There was just something about the Diet Coke Man adverts that suggested perhaps I wasn't the target audience. I lost interest.

It dawned on me that the reason I was struggling is because men don't diet, they 'get ripped'. They follow the editorial insanity of men's magazines' promises to give them a six-pack in six weeks. Never mind that at over 30% body fat the only way I could have got a six-pack in six weeks was with surgical intervention, secret NASA technologies and the intercession of a bona-fide miracle. The *Men's Health* world taught me about magical supplements and expensive specialist equipment that looked like it belonged in a Guantanamo interrogation suite but promised me pecs that could dance their way onto a Broadway show if I just kept to the 30-day programme. I lost interest.

The irrelevance of what they were offering left me searching for other answers. I found none. I began to wonder how many other men out there were being led down the same dead end that I was and finding that their hopes to simply shift a bit of weight were being met with the indifference of the diet industry, or the absurdity of the fitness industry. Where was the advice for men who simply didn't want a beer belly any more? I felt that someone had to do something about it – after all, I was just one of 20.4 million men in the UK who were overweight and obese. Around the world there were over 500 million men. Who was helping them?

By making some very simple changes to what and how I ate and getting active (see page 218 for exactly how I got healthier), over the next couple of years I dropped the weight, to the point where today I'm 167lb (75.7kg). I've lost over 60lb (27kg) and I'm back in 32" trousers, which I haven't worn since I was 14. I'm fitter than I've ever been and I'm still eating delicious, healthy food and still enjoying beer, wine, pizza and ice-cream in a 'diet' that I've come to genuinely enjoy. I've started doing triathlons and yoga. My heart rhythm is under control and I'm far less stressed.

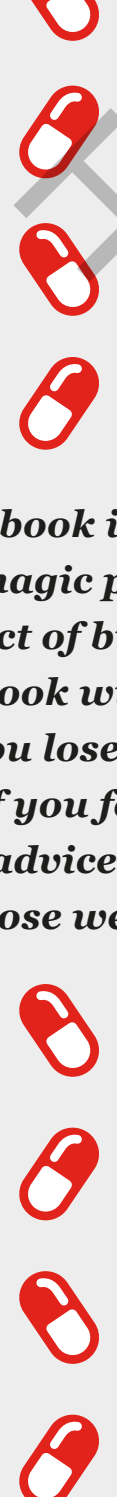
When we started making plans to renovate the house I wasn't working. I'd sold my previous business the year before and vowed that I wouldn't do anything until I felt that I had an idea that I absolutely had to work on. Em kept talking about the pink toilet, but my mind kept coming back to all of those blokes who needed help

'Men don't diet, they "get ripped". They follow the editorial insanity of men's magazines' promises to give them a six-pack in six weeks. Never mind that at over 30% body fat the only way I could have got a six-pack in six weeks was with surgical intervention, secret NASA technologies and the intercession of a bona-fide miracle.'

with their weight. One evening, I sat Em down, fed her Guinness and explained that I thought we should put the pink toilet on hold and use the money to launch a magazine for men who wanted to lose weight. I said I thought we should give it away for free and try and make an impact on the lives of the millions of men who currently had no information or support. To her credit she didn't hit me straight away. We agreed to think, talk and pray about it. In the coming days I noticed she'd stopped pinning things to her 'Dream Toilet' board on Pinterest and we both got a really strong sense that MAN v FAT was the right thing to do.

We launched a crowdfunding campaign which hit 102% of its target and drew support from Jamie Oliver and got organisations like the British Dietetic Association, the National Obesity Forum and the Food and Drink Federation supporting it. You may have noticed that sometimes you have to push really hard to get any forward momentum on a project at all – with MAN v FAT we tapped it and the whole thing just kept rolling, crushing everything in its path. Soon we had one thousand, two thousand, six thousand subscribers – the numbers kept growing. The website got tens of thousands of users in the first month alone. We launched the magazine on 5 May 2014 and this book was conceived and agreed by the end of the same month. MAN v FAT is now helping to support and champion thousands of men who want to lose weight. If you're looking for a fresh start, for some guidance, or just for someone to cheer you on in your battle against fat then you've found it.

And it all came from a pink toilet.



***This book is not
a magic pill.
The act of buying
this book will not
make you lose weight.
But if you follow
the advice you
will lose weight.***

WHAT IS MAN^vFAT?

Let's be very clear about what you will get from reading this book:

- Understanding about why you are fat and what to do about it
- Insight into how other men have lost weight using different methods
- Inspiration and motivation
- Help choosing what diet to do, including how to create your own
- Good habits that will significantly improve any weight-loss plan
- Exercise plans that you can start regardless of your size or fitness
- A structure that will help your weight loss succeed regardless of what diet you do
- Tools that will improve and support your weight-loss efforts

One of the biggest issues that men face when it comes to weight loss is that they often diet on their own. Going it alone leads to a lack of structure and support which often results in men creating massively unsustainable programmes. If you've ever written a plan building yourself up to 1,000 sit-ups in a month, or faded after two days on your Only Lettuce Plan then you'll know what I mean. Men often don't feel that they can get advice on a diet, so they cobble together their own plans from bits of advice their mate once read in a magazine. The result is that they have an incomplete system to follow, no structure to make sure it succeeds and their motivation disappears.

If you don't know it, the process of losing weight can take years to get right and all the while you're struggling with it, you're guaranteed to fail at any diet you try. So what is the process? Quite simply it's the three steps that this book takes you through:



This book will help you master this process. The knowledge that you gain from reading it will ensure that you are equipped with the know-how to control your weight for good.

Let's be very clear about what this book is not:

- **This book is NOT a diet plan.** It will not tell you what foods and drinks to consume to create weight loss. But it will help you choose a diet plan to follow.
- **This book is NOT a magic pill.** The act of buying this book will not make you lose weight. But if you follow the advice it contains you will lose weight.
- **This book is NOT an exhaustive encyclopaedia of weight loss.** The aim is to address the main questions that men have about weight loss.

This book is written by a journalist who has had first-hand experience of weight problems. My skill is a lack of embarrassment at asking smart people stupid questions and presenting the information to you.

I promise that you will not have to purchase any special MAN v FAT equipment, there are no sachets of secret MAN v FAT powders, nor will you be obliged to attend an expensive but secretive retreat once a year – the knowledge of weight loss will be yours to use and freely share forever more.

It should also be noted that this book works from the premise that the reader is coming to this subject fresh. It might well cover some topics in a very basic fashion, or skirt over some of the more in-depth nutritional science. Frankly, I'd rather some readers felt that they were being spoon-fed than leave others wondering which fork they're supposed to be using. Weight loss can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it. You can understand just the basics and still lose weight perfectly successfully. Alternatively, if you want to read this book and then go on to study fast-twitch muscle fibres and glucose response, knock yourself out!

The other thing that this book will not do is take sides in the senseless and boring diet wars. Research has found that the difference between diets is minimal. People who stick to a diet lose roughly the same amount. The key issue though is that it needs to be a diet that you can stick to – it has to fit with your lifestyle and preferences. Why promote a more expensive high-protein diet if you're on a restricted budget? What good is a juice fast to someone who can't stand smoothies? There are a million different paths that will lead to a fitter and healthier you – this book will show you where they are and help you to choose which one is right for you to follow.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The MAN v FAT book is based on your choices. At every step in the book, you will be making choices and taking actions based on your situation and preferences. That does mean that you have to do some work. Throughout this book are tips, actions and tools for you to use. You will find that a workbook or notepad will come in useful while you are reading the book as there are many times when you can take something away from the book and apply it to your life.

Throughout the book you will see Amazing Losers – normal men who have lost weight using a variety of different methods. All of these men are members of the www.manvfat.com site, so if you want to talk to them in more depth about their weight-loss journey, then simply register on the site for free. Search for their name at www.manvfat.com/members and you'll be able to connect directly with them.

The book will describe a range of different concepts and use a number of technical terms. Simple explanations of these terms are to be found in the glossary at the end of the book.

Many of the book's resources and tools will require you to access the MAN v FAT website (www.manvfat.com), though we've tried to keep the references and web URLs as simple as possible. Alongside the book is the MAN v FAT magazine which you can get on your computer, smartphone, tablet, Kindle or laptop. There's also a forum which provides you access to all the tools and support you could need. This means that with the book, the magazine and the website you already have an ongoing support network for your weight loss.

The one thing that I can't provide is a desire to change your life and to be healthier. I can help improve your motivation, but I cannot (and should not) tell you to lose weight. If you are happy with your weight, and your body and fitness levels do not stop you from doing what you want, then this book is not for you. If, however, you want to beat fat, to live longer and to extract more joy from your one and only life, then read on.

Let's get started.

LES STRATFORD

Age: 45 **Job:** Restaurant manager **Height:** 6'2" (193cm)

Heaviest weight: 511lb (231.8kg) **Lowest weight:** 190lb (86.2kg)



At my heaviest weight I got laid off from a job. About a week later I found I suddenly couldn't breathe, hardly at all. Crazy, I didn't go to the hospital – I went to a birthday party! A couple of days later this was still going on and my roommate said, I think you should go to the hospital. At the hospital they found six huge blood clots in my lungs and later that night I flatlined. I stopped breathing and when I woke up doctors and nurses were standing over me asking questions.

I had to choose between a risky surgery or a medical coma – I took the surgery. They had to strap up the fat from my stomach and pump chemicals into my lungs to bust the clots and after about half an hour of this I could breathe again. Lying on that operating table I was epically obese. I had a 64" waist and I was tearing through 5XL shirts. I was mammoth. I stared at the bright light above the operating table and said, 'OK, seriously dude, if I make it through this I am going to get fit in my forties, because what the hell have I done?'

I was always obese as a child – I thought I was big boned and I just accepted that. Back in the early 90s I dieted and got down to about 250lb (113kg) but then I had a bad accident at work. At that same time a relationship I was in ended and those two things just got me. I spiralled after that. I pretty much spent the next 17 years not

caring, right up until I flatlined. It was suicide by food. Occasionally, there would be something in my head saying, 'What the freak are you doing?' Part of you would be trying to wake up and change, but the other part of you is like: whatever.

When I first got home from the hospital I decided to get active by walking more, but after the surgery they weren't sure if there was lung or heart damage. So until I had a follow-up appointment I was a real wuss! I'd walk three-quarters of a mile away from home and come back. I also started monitoring what I was eating. I wasn't counting calories per se but I was starting to push sweets away.

When I started walking I was a snail! My knees hurt and I had an ankle I'd sprained a couple of years ago that would lock. In some ways I felt lost, yet I was incredibly focused, so I was no longer sitting down and playing a video game when I came home, I was researching what I should be eating. I do all my own cooking now and I always keep a food diary. I look at some of the things that I used to eat and shudder. My 'diet' was mostly reducing carbs and avoiding sweet foods. From there it was all just good improvements to my diet, better snacks and hydrating properly.

I still love walking but now I do an insane amount. My shortest route is 4.3 miles, but on a day off it's anywhere between nine to 11 miles, I can do 4.3 miles in 58 minutes. Now my legs don't get fatigued at all. Once I got under 300lb (136kg) I joined a gym because I wanted to try and get a little bit of strength and muscle and burn more calories and now I go three times a week.

It took a long time but I lost the weight and my health is back to normal. The biggest difference for me now is that my whole mental picture is incredibly optimistic. When I was at my heaviest I'd just play *World of Warcraft* but now I wonder if I can get my 4.3 miles done! If you want to lose weight you should know that it's absolutely possible. Believe in yourself and love yourself, because I clearly did not. Know that you never stop learning or progressing, and enjoy the fact that the journey never ends, although it nearly did for me!

www.manvfat.com/members/les-stratford

KIERAN ALGER

Age: 36 **Job:** Journalist **Height:** 5'11" (180.3cm)

Heaviest weight: 184lb (83.5kg) **Lowest weight:** 164lb (74.4kg)



My weight loss was goal-orientated which made it a lot simpler. I had run the London Marathon before, but I really wanted to run it in under three hours and I decided I was going to do anything I had to in order to achieve that. I'd always been a footballer until my early 30s but then I got into running in a big way. I carried a bit of weight around my stomach, but generally I thought I was pretty healthy: I loved fruit, I didn't eat any junk food or fried foods. Like a lot of runners I ate a lot of pasta and bread for the carbs. My treats were beer and very milky lattes with two sugars. I was running a huge amount but I never really seemed to lose any weight, I had a body fat of 15% but the fabled six-pack was nowhere to be seen.

All of that changed when I had a meeting with Giuseppe Minetti from PaleoGym.co.uk, who was one of the trainers for an event I was doing. He put me through some resting metabolic rate and fitness tests. I honestly thought he'd say I was the perfect example of an amateur athlete! What he actually said was that I had the metabolism of a 50-year-old obese man and that if I stopped running I'd balloon up within a month! He said that if I wanted to hit my target of a sub-three hour marathon then I'd have to change the way I ate to a paleo-inspired plan. The rules were simple: no sugar, no gluten, nothing from grains, no legumes, no dairy.

I switched almost overnight to a diet of lean protein, leafy greens and vegetables, limited fruit and about an 80% reduction in my alcohol consumption.

I don't think he thought I'd follow the rules as strictly as he'd suggested but I was brutal. I wouldn't use an OXO cube because it had gluten in! Porridge and blueberries were out for breakfast and instead I ate spinach, poached eggs and salmon or ham. Lunch was a mixed salad with protein and dinner was vegetables with protein. I worked on the theory that my plate would be 75% vegetables and 25% lean, quality protein. Snacks were mixed raw nuts. It was an expensive diet but very quickly I began to see a difference. Within a fortnight it felt like someone had deflated my stomach and I was already down a notch on my belt. My running improved immensely – I was shocked how much more freely I could move as the weight came off. I felt more energised as well and for the first time I started to approach the weights section of the gym. I'd always been a bit fearful of it before, but now I felt like I had the energy not just to run but to lift as well.

You might not feel like you're carrying a huge amount of extra weight – I didn't – but there are still huge benefits to be gained from addressing what and how you eat. I think from an active point of view the energy that I have from losing the weight and really fuelling my body properly is astounding – it gave me a new lease of life. I felt my body tighten up and grow stronger – it was such a positive thing. The weight loss was in many ways a nice by-product of addressing what I ate. When I was out with friends they'd ask whether I was miserable cutting out all of these things, but I didn't feel like that, ever. If anything I was more engaged with what I was eating. I found new recipes and started to learn how the food I ate not only impacted on my performance as an athlete but also on my performance in life.

The three things that had the biggest impact for me were definitely cutting out sugar, reducing alcohol intake and cutting out gluten. Those things really work. I thought I'd miss dairy the most, but I didn't really miss it at all. You very quickly adapt and you reap the benefits from those changes. When I came to the race I was confident that I'd done everything I could to prepare. I'd trained hard, lost 20lb (9kg), built lean muscle mass and my body fat was down to 8%. I finished the race in 2 hours 57 minutes and 56 seconds. Next year it's the Marathon des Sables!

www.manvfat.com/members/alger-kieran

STEP ONE: **UNDERSTAND** **WHY YOU GOT FAT**

SKIP THIS STEP IF:

- You know what causes men to get fat
- You know precisely why you gained weight
- You have taken all the necessary steps to ensure you've changed



‘When you’re younger you can eat what you like, drink what you like, and still climb into your 26” waist trousers and zip them closed. Then you reach that age, 24–25, your muscles give up. They wave a little white flag, and without any warning at all you’re suddenly a fat bastard.’

Rimmer. Red Dwarf.

SPOILER WARNING:



You are fat because you took in more calories than you needed. In short, you’ve been eating and drinking too much and you’ve not been moving enough to offset the incoming calories. That’s it. That’s why you’re fat.



CALORIES IN > CALORIES OUT = FAT

The body is a very effective machine, but it’s a real doom-monger. It is always planning for what happens if everything goes wrong; for when the days of feasting and plenty disappear and the famine comes again. Consequently, one of the prime directives the body has is to try and avoid any energy passing out of the system. Instead it takes that excess energy and stores it in handy fat form across certain regions of your body.

We see this across the animal kingdom – a natural programme that allows for rich times and fallow periods. Think of the lions who sometimes get lucky and come across a big elephant carcass they can have an amazing feed on. Delicious. The problem comes when you realise that at other times you can’t find an elephant carcass for love nor money. Fortunately, the canny lion’s body has stashed some of the energy away in the form of fat. So, for now, the lion doesn’t die. Result.

The problem in the human world is that excess calories lie in wait at every turn, but your grumpy body doesn't know that you're unlikely to face much in the way of starvation. Pessimist that it is, it's still storing those extra calories away, saving the energy for a day when the supermarket shelves are bare and you start to get hungry.

The additional problem for modern humans is that we rarely forage and hunt across great expanses of the world to track down our food any more. Instead we drive to the supermarket and push a trolley around, or sit still and do an online shop. Someone else does the hunter-gathering stuff for us, so the extra calories keep coming, you burn off very little and your body keeps stashing the excess energy away. One day you look in the mirror and realise that you jiggle a lot more than you remember.

What's fantastic about this knowledge is that it really doesn't matter who you are, how old you are, how rich you are, or where you are in the world – this fact is true for you too. Take a look at anyone who has their own battle to wage against fat and it will apply to them. To get rid of the fat, you just have to reverse the process. Take in less energy than your body needs and force it to make up the balance with the fat from the bank of energy you keep in your gut.

Frankly, you could stop reading this book now and you would be equipped with the basic knowledge that you need to go away and change your life, win your battle with fat and keep it off forever.

And yet...

And yet, understanding the basic concept of something isn't the same as having a detailed working knowledge of that thing. I can sit in my garden and watch planes flying overhead with a general idea that the miracle of flight is something to do with thrust, wing shape and drag, but put me in the cockpit of a 747 and pretty soon you'll have 500 passengers who are keen to find someone with a bit more understanding of the concept.

So now we understand what's happened to you, let's forget about the WHAT and work out exactly WHY it happened.

'MAN v FAT is not pushing a commercial diet. I want you to beat fat and then go and live a long and healthy life in complete control of your weight. To do this we have to start at the beginning – we need to look at what your poison is when it comes to incoming energy and, more importantly, to discover why you are poisoning yourself.'

Why you are fat is probably a question that you've asked yourself before; if not, ask it now: why are you fat? What combination of events and circumstances led to your body being swollen with that weird, yellow gunky stuff we call fat? In many cases it's not a particularly simple question. For me I was eating and drinking the wrong foods in the wrong quantities, but I was doing that because I was stressed with a working situation that meant I was doing stupid hours and then 'rewarding' myself with crap, instant-energy foods. I added to the problem by sitting motionless all day in front of a computer and because I was already fat I opted out of any activity that came my way due to embarrassment and fear. The only thing that allowed me to get out of that situation – the stress, the food, the lack of activity – was developing an understanding of what was actually going on.

In every man's battle against fat, understanding what got you into this mess is essential if you are to get out of it and not simply repeat the same mistake and put the weight back on again. It's a strange characteristic of the diet industry that commercial diets spend very little time wondering what caused you to gain weight. Cynical types might suggest that there's very little value for companies to keep you at your goal weight forever. It's always better to have repeat customers, isn't it?

MAN v FAT is not pushing a commercial diet. I want you to beat fat and then go and live a long and healthy life in complete control of your weight. To do this we have to start at the beginning – we need to look at what your poison is when it comes to incoming energy and, more importantly, to discover why you are poisoning yourself.



TOOL:
HEALTH REPORT

Go to www.manvfat.com/healthreport where you will find an in-depth questionnaire about your health. Here you can answer some questions about you and your habits anonymously and get a detailed analysis of the state of your health. If you've ever had questions about your weight, your fitness and how healthy you are then that is precisely what the Health Report is designed to give you.

The Health Report will give you:

- Your suggested weight targets and BMI (see page 158)
- Your current health
- Your chances of developing various weight-related conditions
- Your basal metabolic rate (see page 74)
- Your activity levels and what you need to improve on
- Your hydration levels
- Your sleep levels
- Your digestive health

The report will also show how you compare to an average person of your age and suggest a number of changes that could result in a healthier lifestyle.

OUR SURVEY SAID...

If you want to know what makes men fat then there is a very useful pool of people to ask: fat men. So that's exactly what we did. We launched the Big Fat Survey – an extensive questionnaire polling the views of thousands of overweight and obese men around the world. This gave us one of the most detailed pictures of men's weight issues ever assembled. One thing we looked at was the reasons why men get fat in the first place. The results were surprising:



Over the next section we're going to look at these reasons in more detail and explain what to do if they apply to you. Along with your Health Report (see previous page) this will give you insight into your own situation. It's likely that your own circum will have more than one of these elements at play and, in fact, it may involve all of them.