

Absolute Abs

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CARVING A STRONG AND SLEEK MIDSECTION

Anatomy of your abs

The abdominals are made up of the *rectus abdominis*, the external and internal obliques, and *transversus abdominis* group. The most dominant muscle of the “abdominal group” is the *rectus abdominis*. The *rectus abdominis* is the long flat band of muscle that runs vertically from the fifth, sixth, and seventh ribs down to the pubic bone. There are three horizontal connective tissue bands that stretch across the *rectus abdominis* and create the visible six-pack. The oblique muscles are found at the side of your waist on either side of the *rectus abdominis*. The *transversus abdominis* group has fibres that run horizontally from our sides toward our midline. The *transversus abdominis* is the deepest of the flat muscles of the abdomen.

Nutrition and cardio key for developing a sleek core

It is important to note that the concept of carving a sleek and sexy six pack is not solely related to the amount of crunches that one performs in the gym. The idea of spot reducing the midsection as popularized by many late-night infomercials is simply a myth. Building a beautiful core is related to a regime of clean eating, keeping stress levels in check, cardiovascular exercise, and regular strength training that includes an abdominal training program.

Effectively training your abs follows the principles applied to other muscle groups. The key to improving abdominal

strength and definition is to avoid adapting to one’s abdominal exercises. We have included four basic exercises to challenge the abdominals as well as advanced ways to work the core and limit abdominal “adaptation.” The entire *rectus abdominis* is activated during most abdominal exercises; however, it is possible to challenge the upper abs or lower abs more with certain manoeuvres. Train the abdominal group at least three to four times per week and to fatigue each session. Like other muscle groups, your abdominals require rest in order to achieve gain, so work abdominal rest days into your regular training program. ▶

Fab Ab Exercises

HEEL ON TOE CRUNCH (CHALLENGE THOSE UPPER ABS)



HEEL AND TOE CRUNCH

1

PREPARATION: Lie flat on the floor with legs straight. Place your left heel on top of your right toe, use left hand to support the neck, and place the right arm vertical toward the ceiling. Activate your core by drawing in your navel toward the spine. Keep pelvis in a neutral position.

MOVEMENT: Lead with your vertical (right) arm, lifting both shoulders off the floor toward the ceiling. Keep neck in a neutral position and gently support with left hand. Focus on exhaling throughout the contraction/lift; pause at the end of the contraction.

Repeat the exercise ten to fifteen times on each side (switching the legs and vertical arm). The abdominals should be fatigued at the end of the activity.

Advanced: Add a dumbbell or small medicine ball or partner to the vertical arm.



WITH RESISTANCE

2 FLAT BENCH REVERSE CRUNCH (GREAT FOR THOSE LOWER ABS)

PREPARATION: Lie flat on your back on an exercise bench. Position your pelvis/hips toward end of the bench. Hold side of the bench with arms. Activate your core by drawing in your navel toward the spine. Pelvis is in a neutral position. Raise your legs and bend your knees to a ninety-degree angle.

MOVEMENT: Bend at the waist to lift legs straight up with heels pressed towards the ceiling (reverse crunch). Slowly lower your legs back down towards the start position.

Lower feet (alternating legs) toward the ground maintaining knees at a ninety-degree angle. Do not arch back; maintain low back contact with the bench.



REVERSE CRUNCH



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3

PAC-MAN (TARGET THOSE OBLIQUES)

PREPARATION: Lie on your side, with your hips aligned, legs stacked and positioned slightly forward with legs about thirty degrees in front of hips (legs are positioned forward to avoid targeting the low back/Q.L. muscles, and to focus the

contraction on the obliques). Align your shoulder and elbow and lift to support your upper body onto your forearm.

Raise opposite (non support) arm in a vertical position toward the ceiling.



PAC-MAN

MOVEMENT: Execute this crunch by simultaneously raising both legs (ankles pressed together), and drawing your vertical arm toward shin of the top leg. Repeat the exercise ten to fifteen times on each side (switching sides).

Advanced: Use tubing or pulley cable to add resistance to this exercise. It is important to start light in weight until movement can be executed with perfect technique.



WITH RESISTANCE



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4



ALTERNATING SCISSOR CRUNCH

ALTERNATING SCISSOR CRUNCH (TARGET THEM ALL)

PREPARATION: Lie face up with legs at a ninety-degree angle and stacked over your hips and heels pressed toward the ceiling. Extend both arms straight toward the ceiling, and head in contact with the floor.

Engage abdominals by drawing in navel toward the spine.

MOVEMENT: Contract abdominals and lower one leg toward the floor, keep abdominals engaged and do not let back arch. At the same time reach toward the remaining vertical leg with both arms.

Return to start position. Lower other leg (return first leg to start position) and reach both arms to the new vertical leg. Exhale each time you reach for the vertical leg.



ADVANCED

Repeat the exercise ten to fifteen times (one set includes reaching to both sides).

Advanced: Position yourself on the side edge of a BOSU so that your buttocks are approximately three to four inches from the ground and low back is fully supported. Place one leg bent at a ninety-degree angle at the knee on the floor, and the other leg straight out in front of you. The arms are positioned straight and above your head. Reach arms toward straight leg (repeat fifteen times, then switch legs).