



The Secret of Effective Abdominal Exercises

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Crunches, sit-ups, curl-ups, regardless what you call them most people don't do them correctly. Incorrect abdominal exercises can lead to back pain or neck pain, or just as bad – the psychological pain of getting no results after hundreds and hundreds of crunches!

The fundamentals of effective abdominal exercises are not well known, but they are simple. And, once you're familiar with them you can practice them anywhere - sitting, standing, at the office, at home, even on an outing! In fact, we can practice them together right now.

First we'll find the transverse abdominus. Take a very deep breath in. Hold it for a second. Then, breathe out as hard as you can, with as much force as you would in a very hard sneeze. As you might have noticed, when you breathe out hard your abdominals contract and your naval pulls in towards your spine. Much like when you're trying to put on a tight pair of pants.

The transverse abdominus is known as the body's natural girdle because when it tightens, it pulls your belly in and makes it smaller. So, wouldn't the most effective abdominal exercises work the body's natural girdle? Yes! Unfortunately, most people don't know how to do that. But you just learned!

Let's take it to the next level – breathe in, and breathe out hard. Now hold your abdomen in that contracted position while you take 5 more breaths. Being a personal trainer, I can say from experience that while some people get this right away, some people have to practice for months before they can breathe while tightening the transverse abdominus. Nevertheless it's an important factor in abdominal exercises because you'll need to contract this muscle while doing your crunches, and you don't want to hold your breath the entire time!

The next thing to learn is how to use your rectus abdominus. That's the muscle that gives you a six-pack stomach. The rectus abdominus brings your ribs towards your hips. Yup, it's as simple as that. When you're lying on the floor you can work it better because you're moving against gravity, but you can practice sitting in a chair. Try this - look down at your midsection and bring your ribs towards your hips. Notice how you have to curve your spine in the middle to do it. That's the curve in the spine that you want to get while doing abdominal exercises in order to optimally work your rectus abdominus.

A really good crunch works the transverse and rectus abdominus together, bringing the abdomen in and the ribs towards the hips. It's simple, but it takes practice, and it's not easy. That's where the workout comes in!

It's recommended that you talk to your doctor before starting to workout. This is basic exercise information for the general public. If you have injuries or other physical limitations, this exercise may not be appropriate. A good rule of thumb: If it doesn't feel good- don't do it!

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