

[IMAGE]

Workout Those Abs

By Chelsea Cooper, MPA, CPT

Today many people talk about abs and "core" and wanting to get a sexier, slimmer waistline and who wouldn't ? So I decided to give you my top five ab blasters . So get ready to use these awesome ab blasters, so you can get the waistline you desire.

I have worked in the fitness industry for almost eight years and I've seen a lot of gimmicks, exercises and contraptions that promise to deliver great abs. But for the most part they don't deliver, so the following exercises work only if you do. But before I go into the five exercises lets discuss a few things.

Many of the traditional abdominal exercises like crunches and sit ups put unimaginable strain on your neck and spine with little or minimal impact to the abdominal muscles. In addition, it does nothing to strengthen your lower back and can cause more injury if you do not do these exercises perfectly.

On the other hand these five exercises that I reveal will strengthen your lower back and "core" and at the same time give you sleek and strong abs you want and deserve. I've mention the word "core" a few times and it's a new buzz word in the fitness world but many people have no clue what it is and why it's important so let me give you some information on the "core."

Your Core

The core is more than just your abdominals, though that is what many people associate with the word. The glutes and lower back muscles, called the erector spinae, may come to mind as well. But even these three groups are not all of the core muscles. There is also the psoas muscle of the hips and the multifidus of the spine. All of these fun names are basically muscles that stabilize the trunk, including the spine and pelvis, which protects and strengthens the lower back and really work all of your abdominal muscles, not just the top layer. Exercises designed specifically to target one or all of these muscles are called core exercises.

Now that you have more of an idea of what your core consists of and why it's so important when we are talking about abdominal exercises, let's go on to the next crucial step to get flat ,firmer abs. As a fitness professional, I have to tell you that just doing ab/core exercises alone WILL NOT get you a flat stomach, I

don't care what those infomercials tell you.

You must couple the ab exercises with nutrition and exercise - strength and conditioning programs like: circuit training and cardio strength training, programs that have a cardio and (body or weight) resistant component to them for maximum results. Yes, I did mention nutrition, 80-90 percent of getting a slimmer waist line, and losing weight in general is determined by your eating habits. I did not say a diet and I could actually write a whole article on nutrition alone and how it plays an important part of our daily lives. But for the sake of getting to the five ab blasters, I'll just say eat real food from real animal and plant life. Like fruits, vegetables, and meat that looks like the animal it came from and avoid processed foods and junk food as much as possible. Okay now to the good stuff.

The Five Ab Blasters

1. Plank-to-Pushup

- Start in the top of the push-up position.
- Drop one forearm down and then the other.
- Raise your body in a straight line and rest your bodyweight on your elbows and toes so that your body hovers over the mat.
- Keep your back straight and your hips up. Hold (brace) your abs tight. Contract them as if someone was about to punch you in the stomach, but breathe normally.
- Slowly shift your body into the top of the pushup position. That's one rep.
- Level 1 beginner: Perform above exercise on your knees.
- Level 2 advanced: Perform as described above.

2. V twist w/ med ball (med ball optional)

- Sit on the floor with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. (advance feet off the ground)
- Contract your abs and sit at about a 45 degrees angle.
- Hold a medicine ball with both hands directly in front of you.
- Contracting your abs, twist slowly from your torso to your right and touch the medicine ball to the floor beside you.
- Quickly, but smoothly, contract your abs and twist your torso and touch the medicine ball to the other side.

- Repeat for the desired number of reps or time.

3. Heels to Heaven

- Lay flat on your back legs straight up- get you legs as straight as possible.
- Flex your toes toward you and heels toward the sky.
- Cross your arms.
- Raise your hips off the floor without using neck or arms. ([see video](#))

4. Push Up Reaches

- Start in the top of the pushup position.
- Place the hands on the floor slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Keep your abs braced, slowly reach out with one arm out as far as you can touch the ground with you hand.
- Bring hand back into push up position.
- Alternate with other arm.
- Keep your body in a straight line at all times.
- Repeat for desired time or reps.

5. Mountain Climbers

- Brace your abs. Start in the top of the push-up position.
- Keep your abs braced, pick one foot up off the floor, and slowly bring your knee up to your chest. Do not let your hips sag or rotate.
- Keep your abs braced and slowly return your leg to the start position.
- Alternate sides until you complete all of the required repetitions.

For a demonstration of these exercises, watch this video <http://youtu.be/iyRgJ8Ykhi8>

Most of these ab exercises require upper body strength. So don't get discouraged if you can't do them all right away. Start on your knees and work your way up. That's why these exercise are so great because you are using upper body strength as well as you abs and core ...gotta love it!

Enjoy!

Chelsea Cooper, MPA, CPT, is certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine as a personal trainer, performance enhancement specialist, and rehab and exercise specialist. To learn more, visit www.trainwithchelsea.com.

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