

[IMAGE]

Plank You Very Much

By Editorial Staff

The "plank" is a popular core-developing exercise these days, but most people who've tried a plank or two only know about the basic variety: supporting your body-weight with only your hands (mimicking a push-up position) or forearms and feet for as long as possible, keeping the core as tight as possible). But your plank training doesn't end there; no, it's just getting started. Once you've mastered the basic plank, try these great variations that will challenge you and take your workout (and core) to the next level:

1. *Left-Right-Center*: With hands flat on the ground in the push-up position, pull your knees in tight toward your right shoulder, then back out behind you; then in toward your left shoulder and back out; then straight in toward your chest. Repeat for as many reps as you can handle, keeping your stomach tight the entire time and concentrating on squeezing your core with every movement.
2. *Get a Leg Up*: While in the basic plank position, lift one foot off the ground, keeping the leg essentially parallel with the rest of your body for 5 seconds. Lower and repeat with the other foot. Alternate for as long as you can hold the plank / lift your feet. (You'll start to feel it in your core more quickly than you would when performing a regular plank because removing the foot from the ground puts a greater load on your core and the rest of your body.)
3. *plank - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Climbing Mountains*: Assume a plank position with the hands in the push-up position. Tighten the core and shift your right foot toward your right hand in one smooth motion (as if you're trying to touch your hand with your foot). Now immediately swivel your hips so your left foot gets as close as possible to your left hand while your right foot returns to its original position behind you. Repeat for as many reps as possible. This should be a clean movement, transitioning one foot from point A (behind you in the push-up position) to point B (as close to your hand as possible) in one step, and then repeating on the other side in the same fashion.
4. *Jumping Jacks*: OK, so you're actually only doing part of the standard jumping jack (moving your legs, not your arms), and of course, you're doing it in a plank position, not standing: With weight supported by hands or forearms, core tight, pop both legs / feet out to the side simultaneously as far as they'll go, then draw them back in toward the starting position. Repeat as you maintain the plank position, doing as many reps as you can to failure.

These are only a few of the countless plank variations you can incorporate into your daily workout to tone and tighten your core. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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