

[IMAGE]

Abdominal Training Helps the Low Back

Ask any professional bodybuilder this question: When you're onstage during a competition, what's the most important muscle group to showcase to the judges? Now here's the response you'll most often hear: abdominals. Chiseled arms, legs and pectorals might be impressive, but if the abdominals aren't equally impressive, chances are you won't be crowned Mr. or Ms. Olympia anytime soon.

Firm, defined abdominal muscles are considered important on an aesthetic level, but research also points to their value in promoting wellness, specifically by protecting the low back from injury. Case in point: a study in the journal *Physical Therapy*, in which eight healthy men with no prior incidence of low back injury or back pain performed four different abdominal (curl-up) exercises. One exercise involved a stable surface (curl-ups on a padded bench with the knees flexed); three other exercises utilized varying moveable surfaces (feet flat on floor, torso supported over a gym ball; feet on bench at the same height as the ball; and feet flat on the floor, ball replaced with a round wobble board).

Results: Performing the curl-up exercise on any of the three moveable surfaces appeared to increase abdominal muscle activity compared with exercise using a stable surface, most likely the result of the increased need to enhance spine stability and whole-body stability to reduce the risk of falling off the moveable surface.

So keep those abs in shape! You'll look better, feel better, and you'll be protecting the abdominal muscles, the low back and the spine against injury. Ask your doctor of chiropractic for more information.

Reference:

Vera-Garcia FJ, Grenier SG, McGill SM. Abdominal muscle response during curl-ups on both stable and labile surfaces. *Physical Therapy*, June 2000: Vol. 80, No. 6, pp564-69.

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