

[IMAGE]

Exercise Balls vs. Mats: And the Winner is...

Fitness comes in all forms these days. Every channel you flip to has a commercial with the latest, greatest and easiest-to-use exercise equipment. But what is legitimate and what is smoke and mirrors? Researchers from the Universities of Waterloo and New Brunswick, Canada recently conducted a study on the effectiveness of exercise balls for certain abdominal exercises.

All eight male participants were active and healthy, and none complained of lower back pain for a year preceding their involvement in the study. During the exercises, 14 pairs of electrodes were placed on the skin of each participant over seven different stomach muscles. Measurements were recorded while the participants performed three exercises on the mat and the same three on the exercise ball.

The results showed that the use of an exercise ball did not increase the degree of muscle use or work the abdominal muscles harder. There did not seem to be a training advantage associated with the use of an exercise ball while performing the basic extension exercises versus the use of a mat.

If you're looking to get into the exercise "game" but don't know where to start, talk to your chiropractor, who can outline a daily regimen of safe exercises suitable to your needs. For more information on exercise, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/sports/exercise.

Reference:

Drake J, Fischer S, Brown S, et al. Do exercise balls provide a training advantage for trunk extensor exercises? A biomechanical evaluation. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* 2006;29(5):354-362.

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