

ABDOMINAL AND LOW BACK EXERCISES

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BS EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY / MINOR SPORTS MEDICINE

For all of the abdominal exercises, pull the navel into the spine, brace abdominal muscles as if you were about to be punched in the stomach (suck them in). If your back feels like it is straining, or you can no longer keep the abs pulled in, stop the exercise. If you can't do more than 10 of one exercise, go to an easier version, or an easier exercise.

Perform 5 to 8 sets, with 12 to 20 reps for the abs, and 3 to 6 sets for the low back per core workout. Pick one or two sets from different exercises. Perform a core workout three times per week.

Heel Digs

Lie on back with the legs elevated. Bend knees to a 90-degree angle, with the knees directly over hips, and the feet directly parallel with knees. Move leg from the hip, keeping the knee bent. Lower leg so the heel touches the floor, then bring it back to 90 degrees, repeat with other leg. If the back arches, only lower to the point that the abs are supporting the low back.

Easier variations: - Begin with the feet on the floor.

Harder variations: - Raise the opposite arm back by the head at the same time you are lowering the leg.

Bicycles

Begin in the same leg position as the heel digs. Place hands lightly behind head. Crunch up and rotate right shoulder towards left knee. (Keep knees directly over hips as you crunch and rotate.) At the same time, straighten right leg into the air. Return to starting position. Repeat by crunching up and rotating left shoulder to right knee, and straightening left leg into the air.

Leg Slide

Lie on the back with the legs straight up, vertical to the floor, balanced over hips. Put hands on knees. Lower the right leg towards the floor, and bring the left arm back by the ear. Bring them back together. Repeat with left leg and right arm. Move slowly. Keep head on floor. If the back arches, only lower to the point that the abs are supporting the low back.

Harder variations: - Hold a weighted ball in your hands. Lower both arms with the ball back towards the floor. At the same time lower the right leg towards the floor. Bring them back together. Repeat with the left leg.
- As you bring the weighted ball back towards the legs, flex the spine and lift the torso off the floor.

Leg Slide with twist

Same position as above exercise. Lower both arms back towards floor as you lower one leg. As you return to the starting position, crunch up (lift torso off floor) at an angle, across the body. Return to the floor as you reach the arms back overhead. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Hovers

Lie on stomach, resting on elbows. Make sure shoulders are directly inline with elbows. Pull navel to low back, tighten abs, lift body off floor, keeping elbows under shoulders, and rising up on to the toes. Keep spine straight, including neck. You should be looking straight down. Aim for keeping the position for 60 seconds. If the back begins to strain or arch, or the hips begin to fall, lower knees to floor and keep position for the remaining time.

Variations:

- Push-up position; Push body up onto hands, as if you were going to do a push-up. Keep position as long as you can before the back is strained, and the hips begin to fall.
- Side Hover; Lie on side with elbow under shoulder, and feet either stacked, or one in front of the other. lift body off floor, keep elbows under shoulders, and spine straight. Keep position as long as you can before the back is strained, and the hips begin to fall.

Swimmers

Lie on stomach, stretch arms out in front of body with the thumbs-up. Keep head in neutral position, and pull abs in. Raise the right leg and the left arm, hold, lower back to floor. Repeat with left leg, and right arm. Keep hips level to floor when raising legs.

Cobra

Begin in the same position as above, keep legs on the floor, raise torso up from the hips. At the same time you lift off the mat, bend the elbows and draw arms into side of body. Your hands should end up on either side of your head. As you move arms, squeeze the shoulder blades together. Return torso to floor, and arms to front

Swan

Begin in the same position as above. When you lift upper body, keep arms out in front, and lift the legs at the same time. Keep head in alignment with spine.