

Summertime Stomach



by
Franny
Goodrich

Who doesn't want a flat, trim waist-line this summer? Here's the scoop on all the crunches, sit-ups, trunk curls, planks, rotary torso machines, and other redundant core and abdominal exercises we perform daily in our quest to have a hard, flat, and sexy waist-line.

The abdominal muscles are the most misunderstood part of the body when it comes to exercise. Fitness marketers have also made the word "core" popular these days. Our core is not an actual muscle group. It is simply the connecting muscles that join our upper body to our lower body, our front to our back, and our left side to our right side.

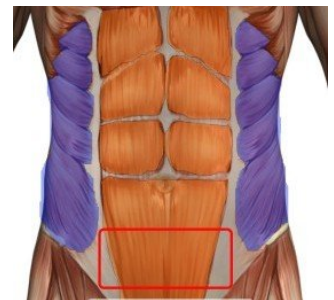


All the crunches in the world won't make that gut go away; it's all about caloric intake.

Nobody has flabby abdominal or core muscles. Weak, yes, but rarely flabby, and here's why: Muscles, by their nature are

not flabby; flab is flabby. In-other-words, what most of us recognize as a flabby gut, is in-fact a case of too much fat covering the abdominal wall. The underlying abdominal muscles are just fine. Without realizing it, we actually do many things to keep them strong. Our abdominal and core muscles are actually at work for most of our waking day. Walking, bending, twisting, and even sitting, keeps them continuously contracting in-concert.

Additionally, whenever we engage in forceful breathing, or when the body braces itself to lift something overhead, there is a forceful isometric contraction of all abdominal muscles. The truth is there is not a single exercise on this earth that will get rid of belly fat. The fat on your body is more about calorie-intake than about what type of exercises you do. So, you may ask, should you work your abdominal muscles at all? Sure! Strong abs helps reduce low-back stress, and improve posture. However, you must remember to work your abs with brief, intense resistance exercise as you would any other muscle.



Your abdominals muscles may be weak, but muscles don't get flabby.

Folks seem to think they need to do countless reps to trim their waistline, but this only equates to wasted, redundant movement. You cannot "trim" a muscle. If anything, the muscles of the abdominal area will grow slightly when trained. Without

boring you with a lengthy physiology explanation about muscle-tendon length ratio or cross-section width of muscle-bellies, just know that, much like facial muscles that do not grow when we chew on a piece of steak until our jaw aches, the abdominal and trunk muscles do not possess the physiological factors to experience much growth when strenuously worked.

If you're looking to sport a chiseled set of abs, you must reduce your calorie intake to melt away belly-fat. What's the best exercise? Don't over-think this. Forget doing side bends or hundreds of sit-ups; just select your favorite abdominal curl exercise, and then have at it! You should be exercising these muscles 3 – 4 times per-week, on non-consecutive days.

Here is something else to remember when doing abdominal work; frontal abdominal muscles have a range of movement of about four inches. The remainder of the movement engages the hip-flexor muscles. Therefore, crunch-type movements should have a very small range of motion. Also, keep the tension continuously on the abdominal muscles. Most people allow momentum to swing their body like a pendulum during an abs exercise, but this is counter-productive. More often than not, any person performing 50-or-more abdominal crunches, is probably doing them incorrectly, or needs to add resistance to the movement. The real secret to a sexy, flat mid-section is not finding the right ab exercise, but addressing the energy equation of calories-in vs. calories-out.