

Abdominal Curl

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Targeted Muscle: Rectus abdominis

Starting Position: Lie supine with one knee bent with the foot flat on the floor and the other leg extended. Cross your arms over the chest or place them, unclasped, behind the head with the elbows out to the side. Maintain neutral alignment in the cervical spine.



Action: Engage the abdominals and exhale while curling up. Initiate the movement by gently flexing the cervical spine by dropping the chin slightly. Next, activate the abdominals by raising the shoulders and upper back off the floor toward the pelvis. Contract at the top of the movement. Pause, then slowly return to the starting position.



Common Errors:

Error: Forward neck position

Correction: Imagine an orange tucked between the chin and neck and maintain this position throughout the exercise.

Error: Moving the elbows forward while curling up

Correction: Keep elbows out of vision and remain open through the chest and shoulders.

Error: Holding the breath

Correction: Emphasize exhaling during the exertion phase.

Variation: Change arm position and lever length to increase or decrease intensity, add dumbbells or weights, decline with bench (advanced), feet up on bench

Stability Ball Push-ups

By using a stability ball and keeping your body rigid during push-ups, you will develop stabilizing muscles around the mid section and hips. Target muscle groups: chest, shoulders, triceps, lower back, and abs.



Roll forward placing your body weight on your hands until stability ball rests under your shins. Your body should be extended in a straight line from the stability ball.



Lower your upper body towards floor, bending at the elbows to perform push-ups. Keep the abdominal muscles tight. Keep the body tight and straight from shoulders to toes.



Return to start position.



Or for increased difficulty, roll the ball back so only your feet are resting on it.



Standing Yoga Poses

Yoga offers many benefits. While the ultimate goal of this age-old philosophy is to realize our divine nature, the positive effects on physical health and mental well-being are impressive.

The breathing techniques in yoga improve respiration while producing a cognitive quiescence, or “mental stillness,” and an associated decrease in central nervous system activity.

Try these basic standing poses:

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Stand tall but relaxed with your feet firmly planted on the ground, together or hip-width apart. Keep your shoulders down and your abdomen pulled in and up. Arms are at your sides, palms turned toward your legs. Visualize a vertical line connecting your earlobe, shoulder, and the sides of the hip, knee and ankle. Look straight ahead.

Vrksasana (Tree Pose)

Begin in Mountain Pose.



Place the sole of your right foot on the inside of the upper left thigh. Open your right knee to the right. Keep your hips square and contract the thigh muscles of the standing leg. Bring your palms together at your heart center.



Arms may also be stretched up overhead with the fingers interlaced, keeping the index fingers pointing up in “Steeple Mudra”. Repeat on other side.

Stability Ball Wall Squat

A great way to squat without straining your back is the stability ball wall-squat. It works your glutes, quads, and hamstring and requires you to contract your core muscles. This exercise will allow you to go through the full range of motion of a squat while keeping your back supported.

Step 1: Start with the ball pressed between your lower back and the wall. Position your feet shoulder-width apart so that your weight is on your heels as if you are going to sit in a chair. Press your back into the ball for support.



Step 2: Begin the descent keeping your core muscles tight and continue to press your back. Descend to a ninety-degree angle at the knee joint.



Step 3: Keep your back pressed on the ball and extend your knees and return to the starting position.



Note: As leg strength increases, decrease your pressure against the ball.

Double and Single-leg Bridge

Targeted Muscles: Gluteals, hamstrings, back extensors and stabilizers

Starting Position: Sit on the ball and slowly roll down until only your shoulders are in contact with it.



Action: Balance yourself and lift your buttocks first, toward the ceiling. Pause and lower buttocks last.



Variation: For added difficulty, place your left leg across your right thigh for a single-leg variation.



Repeat 8 to 12 times and then switch sides.

Balance-training Exercises

Having good balance is key to performing activities of daily living and maintaining a mobile and independent lifestyle.

To train clients for better balance, first determine the appropriate level of challenge. It is wise to err on the conservative side by selecting an exercise for which the level of confidence is high for both the trainer and trainee. Training should begin by enhancing balance on one leg before progressing to a higher degree of difficulty.

One-legged Balance Exercises

Support is optional. Switch legs after 10 to 15 seconds; repeat for three to five sets.

Level 1: Client stands on one leg can do on ground, trampoline or try BOSU



Level 2: Client stands on one leg on a mini-trampoline.



Level 3: Client stands on one leg on a mini-trampoline and gently rebounds without breaking contact with the trampoline bed.



Level 4: Client stands on one leg and attempts to balance on a wobble board.



Level 5: Standing on one leg, the subject intentionally rocks the board laterally. Repeat for anterior/posterior.



Level 6: Divide the mini-trampoline with a line and have the subject hop over it laterally. Repeat for anterior/posterior.



Intermittent Stair Climbing Improves Fitness

In a recent study, British researchers confirmed that some exercise is better than nothing. Researchers found that for sedentary people, even a few minutes of daily stair climbing - a vigorous but easily accessible form of exercise - can improve cardiovascular health. Previous studies have shown that accumulating short bouts of exercise can make a difference; this one shows just how short those bouts can be.

Twenty-two sedentary college-aged women walked up 199 steps - more than you're likely to find at home, but doable in a high-rise - in 2.25 minutes, a "brisk but comfortable" pace which shot their heart rates up to 90 percent of their predicted maximum.

They progressed from one ascent per day during the first week to six ascents per day, for a total of 13.5 minutes over the course of a day, during the sixth and seventh weeks. By the end of this modest exercise program, the women were measurably more fit: Heart rate, oxygen uptake and blood lactate levels during climbing were reduced, and their HDL ("good") cholesterol levels had increased.

Outer Thigh Lift

Targeted Muscles: Hip abductors

Starting Position: Lie on the left side and rest the head on the arm, keeping the neck in line with the rest of the spine. Bend the left leg and engage the abdominals to help stabilize the spine and pelvis. Keep the right leg extended and toes pointed forward.



Action: Abduct the leg through a full range of motion. Pause, then slowly return to the starting position. Repeat with the other leg.



Variations:

- Standing
- To increase intensity, shorten the length of the lever by bending the knee of the leg being lifted.

Equipment Variation: Elastic resistance (standing or side-lying)

Common Errors:

Error: Allowing the hips to roll forward or backward while performing the exercise

Correction: Maintain a neutral pelvis by engaging the abdominals and stabilizing the pelvis, not allowing it to move during execution of the exercise.

Error: Allowing the thigh to externally rotate while lifting the leg

Correction: Keep the knee facing forward throughout the exercise.

Inner Thigh Lift

Inner Thigh Lift

Targeted Muscles: Hip adductors

Starting Position: Lie on the left side, and rest the head on the arm, keeping the neck in line with the rest of the spine. Hips and shoulders should face forward with the abdominals engaged to help stabilize the spine and pelvis. Straighten the lower leg, then bend and cross the upper leg over it.



Action: Slowly lift the lower leg through a full range of motion. Pause, then slowly return to the starting position. Repeat with the other leg.



Variations:

- To decrease intensity, shorten the length of the lever by bending the knee of the leg being lifted.
- Supine; flex both hips 90 degrees. From an adducted position, slowly abduct the thighs and return to the starting position.

Equipment Variation: Elastic resistance (standing or side-lying)

Common Errors:

Error: Allowing the hips to roll forward or backward while performing the exercise

Correction: Maintain a neutral pelvis by engaging the abdominals and stabilizing the pelvis, and not allowing it to move during the execution of the exercise.

Error: Allowing the thigh to externally rotate while lifting the leg

Correction: Keep the lower knee facing forward throughout the exercise.

Upper Back with Stretch Band

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, knees soft, posture erect and abdominals tight. Grasp the stretch band so hands are slightly wider than shoulder width apart. With your palms facing the floor, bend your elbows and lift your arms to chest height.



Expand your chest and pull your shoulder blades back and together. Keep your lower body stationary and maintain good posture throughout the exercise.



Return to starting position and repeat.

Stretch Band Lat Pulldown

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Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, knees soft and abdominals tight. Grasp the stretch band so hands are slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Lift your arms just above your head, palms facing front; look straight ahead.



Extend arms laterally at shoulder height with firm wrists and slightly bent elbows. Pull your shoulder blades back and together and expand the chest.



Return to starting position and repeat.

Side Bridge

Targeted Muscles: External and internal obliques

Lie on one side with knees bent 90 degrees. Support the upper body by keeping the elbow directly beneath the shoulder. Being careful not to let the top hip rotate forward, engage the abdominals and use the torso to lift the hips. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds, maintaining a neutral neck and spine position.



Common Errors:

Error: Dropping the hips

Correction: Slightly contract the gluteals and the abdominals to keep the body in good alignment.

Error: Twisting or tilting the head

Correction: Keep the head and neck aligned with the spine.

Variation: Extend the legs to increase the intensity.



Core Body Medicine Ball Exercises

Many personal trainers, fitness instructors and strength coaches are turning to the medicine ball as an integral part of their training programs. The following exercises can be used to provide a quick workout. Choose the appropriate difficulty level and aim to complete 12 to 15 repetitions of each exercise.

Pullover to Knees

- Beginning: Lie back with knees bent and hold the ball over head. Pull ball over to chest while keeping lower back on the ground.
- Intermediate: Lie back with knees bent and hold the ball over head. Pull ball over head to hips.
- Advanced: Lie back with knees bent. Pull the ball over head while sitting the body up enough to touch the top of the knees.

Partner Version: Sit-up Pass

- Sit with knees bent, facing one another, about 4 to 6 feet apart. The person with the ball lies back with ball overhead.
- Bring the ball overhead and throw the ball and contract the abdominals as you sit up.
- Aim for just above your partner's head. As the ball is caught, the partner lowers back to the ground.
- Continue to throw back and forth.

Hip Crunch

- Beginning: Lie back with knees bent and ball between the knees. Contract the abdominals and pull knees toward chest; lower feet back to the ground.
- Intermediate: Prop up the upper body on the elbows and continue as for beginner.
- Advanced: Leaning back on hands, continue as for beginner.

Partner Version: Oblique Throw

- Stand four to six feet apart, each facing forward.
- Holding the ball with both hands, bring the ball to side opposite partner and toss across the body.
- Continue to throw the ball back and forth.