

## **Tips for Training the Abdominals**

Apply the following to your abdominal training to receive improved function and aesthetics.

**1. Order of training** – Whether training all your abdominals in one session or over 3 days, train in the order of lower, obliques and upper abdominals. The reason for this is the relative neurological demand placed on each. The lower abdominals have the greatest demand and need for synergistic support from the other abdominals. This is why they are trained first. Conversely, the upper abdominals have the least demand placed on them and need for support. This is why they are trained last. This simply follows the principle of training movements from least stable to most stable.

**2. Pull belly button in prior to each abdominal movement** – This will activate your transverses abdominus and internal oblique. The reasons for this are:

- All movement is more efficient and effective when starting from the core (TVA)
- The TVA stabilizes dynamically as well as posturally. Therefore, the trunk and spinal regions are stabilized as other abdominal muscles are used.

The Internal obliques are activated. This is vital for enhancing pelvic stability whilst exercising the abdominals.

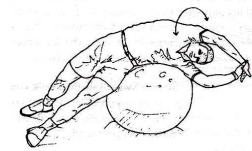
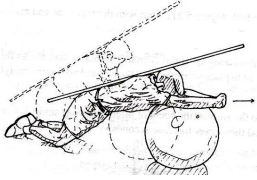
**3. Breathe correctly** – As a general rule, breathe in, increasing the size of your stomach, then pull your bb in before performing each repetition. This is generally performed in the recovery phase of each repetition. Breathe out through pursed lips half way (past the hard part of the lift) through the exertion phase.

**4. Position your tongue correctly** - Place your tongue just behind your front teeth on the roof of your mouth. Find this position by swallowing. The correct position is where your tongue ends up. This anchors and activates the deep neck flexors so the neck extensors don't become overused – which is often a common problem and can lead to neck pain.

**5. Ensure a balance between trunk flexors and extensors** - Don't over exercise the abdominal muscles (trunks flexors - especially the Rectus Abdominus), relative to the back muscles (trunk extensors). When performing crunch type exercises it is important to use a swiss ball to promote a balance between flexion and extension. Too many flexion related exercises can lead to a number of problems including compromised breathing, forward head posture, and neck and shoulder pain/dysfunction.

**6. Watch your posture while you exercise** – Exercising your abdominals with poor posture can only lead to muscle imbalance, muscle, joint pain and dysfunction.

**7. Only perform abdominal exercises that you can handle** - This means, exercises that you are able to stabilize with. This can be measured by your ability to keep your belly button in through the exertion phase of the exercise. Conversely, as your core region gets stronger, challenge yourself to perform abdominal exercises that are more challenging – only to the point that you can stabilize though. Feeling your lower back muscles working means your abdominal muscles have fatigued and your back muscles start being used. This is not necessarily ideal.



## **Reference**

CHEK, P. (1998) **Scientific Core Conditioning Correspondence Course** A CHEK Institute Publication. Vista. California, USA. [www.chekinstitute.com](http://www.chekinstitute.com)