

The Hard Truth About Six Pack Abs

The headlines are all over the fitness magazines. “Get a Six Pack in Six Days”, “Six Surefire Ways to get Six Pack Abs”. But how do you know what exercises you should *really* be doing to get the stomach you have always dreamed of? The first thing to recognize is this: there is no one exercise routine that will give every person in America the same results. As humans, our bodies react differently to different stimuli. The best thing that you can do is arm yourself with the facts and make the best decisions for *your* body based on that information. Or better yet, have a professional help you!

The first myth to forget about is that doing a million crunches will get you a six pack. While crunches are a very effective exercise when done correctly, if you have a layer of excess fat on top of that sculpted abdominal wall, no one will ever see the results of your hard work! You guessed it, you also need to hop on that treadmill (or bike, or stair climber) to really slim down and show your toned physique.

The second myth is that there are six muscles that run down the front of your torso. In fact, that elusive six pack is all one muscle, the rectus abdominus. This muscle appears to be six small muscles when a person is fit and toned. The reason behind this is that there are bands of tissue that run along the muscle. The first band is the linea alba, which runs vertically down the center of the muscle. The second are the tendinous inscriptions, which run horizontally along the muscle. That being said, there are also no such things as “lower abs”, this area is simply the lower portion of the rectus abdominus.

Which brings me to the third myth: leg lifts will work your “lower abs”. Leg lifts are a great exercise. They help to tone and strengthen your *hip flexors*. This will give you the definition that runs in a “v” shape toward your groin area, such as that you see on models in the magazines when they wear their pants low. If you also add in spinal flexion, then you will be working the rectus abdominus as well.

So what are the six abdominal muscles and how do you work them effectively? The first we have already addressed, the rectus abdominus. The best exercise in my opinion to work this area is a crunch. However, many people are still doing this exercise incorrectly. Be sure to keep your elbows back, out of your view. And focus on lifting your head up toward the ceiling, not toward your knees. You will know that you are doing the exercise correctly if just your shoulder blades and head are lifting up off of the ground.

The second abdominal muscle is the transverse abdominus. This muscle is the deepest of the abdominal muscles and extends between the ribs and hips. The fibers in this muscle run horizontally, so any exercise that incorporates spinal flexion will strengthen and tone this muscle. Try doing some of those crunches on a decline bench to really target and tone here.

The third and fourth muscles are the internal obliques. These muscles reside on either side of the torso and the fibers run in an inverted “v” shape. Because of the fact that the fibers run in a diagonal pattern, torso rotation is necessary to contract and work this muscle effectively. If you are already on the decline bench doing crunches, try the same movement, but twist one elbow toward the opposite knee to strengthen and tone this area.

And finally, the fifth and sixth abdominal muscles are the external obliques. Again, they are located on either side of the torso and run in an upright “v”. Thus, they also require torso rotation to be challenged effectively. While on the ground doing crunches, drop your knees to one side and perform the same motion that you would with a traditional crunch. Don’t forget to work the other side as well!

In conclusion, a toned and strong midsection is the power house of any fit body. The key to attaining this important strength is to work all six abdominal muscles efficiently and effectively. You can do this successfully by scheduling your 3 free sessions with myself or one of the other trainers, or do your own research to ensure that you are getting the most out of your workout routine. For more information on the findings in this article, feel free to contact me through the gym or e-mail.

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