

Fab abs on the way

Written by Toni Tiu
Monday, 26 April 2010 00:00



Have you ever wished you could have the sexy flat abs of celebrities? Do you suck in your gut every time your picture is taken? Have you ever reached for a [girdle](#) to mask that belly bulge? A flat stomach makes for a sexy body. Curves become more pronounced, and there wouldn't be extra love handles to hold on to.

The [tummy](#) , however, is one of the most difficult body parts to tone. Perhaps that is why flat, muscular abs are irresistible and much coveted – they not only look sexy, they're a sign that one is in prime health!

With the summer season ongoing, whipping out that bikini or board shorts may be a challenge with that extra girth in your midsection. With perseverance, flat abs are achievable. Here are some tips to get you started:

Eat your stomach flat

A way to one's sexy abs is also through the stomach! Common sense is to avoid junk food.

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Make good food choices to get the flat belly you desire.

Stay away from [sugar](#) , which can slow down your [metabolism](#) . Sugar comes in the form of soft drinks, fruit drinks, pastries, even white bread and white rice.

Say bye-bye to bloat-causing foods. Carbonated beverages, beans and foods high in sodium retain water in the body, [causing the stomach to swell](#) .
Drink lots of water instead.

Go for [protein](#) . Consider eating more meat and fish instead of carbs to help lessen love handles.



Choose fresh over processed. Perk up your diet with fresh fruits and fresh vegetables. Stay hydrated with water over sodas and juices.

Favor fiber. [Not only does fiber fill you up](#) , but it also prevents [constipation](#) , which can cause tummy bulge. Eat [whole grain](#) food, fruits and vegetables.

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Do your crunches right

The crunch exercise is one of the most common exercises that target the abdominal muscles. Note that crunches are *not* sit-ups. [Sit-ups](#) involve lifting the entire back off the floor, while with crunches only the upper back is lifted. Crunches are therefore directed at the [rectus abdominis muscle](#). Crunches are relatively safe exercises. Sit-ups can cause strain on the lower back and hurt the spine.



Traditional crunches: The [proper starting form for crunches](#) is to lie down on the floor with bent knees. Carefully curl the shoulder towards the pelvis with hands loosely behind the head or crossed at the chest. Hands should not be used to force the neck forward as it can cause strain. The neck should be relaxed. While contracting the abdominal muscles, lift the upper body without arching the back. Hips and legs should stay stationary. Hold the crunch, then relax and return to starting position.

Other types of crunches : The reverse crunch, which is done with the legs instead of the chest; the twisting crunch, lifting one shoulder at a time to strengthen the obliques; the bicycle crunch, bringing alternating elbows and knees together, simulating a bicycle pedal motion. According to the [American Council on Exercise](#) , the bicycle crunch is most effective in targeting the [rectus abdominis](#) and

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obliques

Crunches with tools: A [stability ball](#) requires the abs to do more work, making it a highly effective crunch exercise partner. Holding weights under the chin could also be used to increase resistance.

Xavier, a 36-year-old operations manager who works out three times a week, says, “There's really no substitute for crunches. You can do leg raises but that actually works a different part of the abs. It's actually much harder than the normal crunches.”

“I do a lot of variations of crunches,” says Tina, a health-conscious 27-year-old graphic designer. “Sometimes I challenge myself on days when I'm working out on my abs to have more reps than before. Example, I did 50 the last time, then I have to do 100 today.”

You can choose from many more abdominal exercises to get fab abs. The key is to be consistent in hitting your ab workouts and do them in proper form and technique. Quality of exercise is more important than quantity, however, so make sure that you are in proper form.

While stomach-focused exercises can help tone ab muscles, incorporating these exercises into even more intense workouts will get you faster results!

Move to cardiovascular workouts

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While crunches tone your ab muscles, they won't get rid of the fat that covers them. [Cardiovascular or aerobic exercises](#)

boost oxygen delivered to the heart and muscles, pushing you to breathe harder, sweat more and burn more fat and calories during the workout. Keeping the heart rate up during the workout burns more fat! The more fat you burn, the more those toned abs will be revealed.



[Running](#) , [jogging](#) and **brisk walking can help build strong abs.** A tight core makes for better form, which makes for a more effective workout, which makes for more fat burned. "I spend an hour walking each day," says Elmer, a 40-year-old doctor. "It probably helps in maintaining my abdominal muscle tone."

[Swimming](#) helps contract abs through its different [strokes](#) , which require arms pushing forward and pulling back. Breathing out underwater also helps tighten the abdominal muscles.

[Tennis](#)' and [badminton](#)'s [backhand and forehand movements](#) move the body from side to side, exercising the obliques. Swinging a golf club can achieve the same thing.

Take out that [hula hoop](#) ! The more rounds you do, the slimmer your waist can become.

Don't discount household chores! The back and forth movement of [sweeping](#) can tone those abs. The bending and lifting during [gardening](#) can strengthen ab muscles too.

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Consider [capoeira](#), which combines martial arts and dance in its routines. "I try to do other exercises that would involve a lot of the core muscles. I must say that [capoeira](#) has helped me a lot with my core muscles. So you're not just working out on your abs but back and butt and legs as well. It makes you stronger," Tina adds. "When I lose the fat, the abs will start showing!"

Explore [core training](#). "The best way is doing core exercises, not much of sit-ups but tightening your stomach while doing other exercises," shares Barbara, a 34-year-old artist. "I also find using the [elliptical machine](#) the best way to tone my stomach, back, legs, thighs and bottom. My trainer also told me that core exercises strengthen your back for better posture as well. What I learned is I am better off doing short bursts of intense, fat-burning work called [interval training](#). I hear it's the fastest way to jumpstart your metabolism..." Jump lunge, judo push-up, jump squat, and inverted rows are other core exercises that help define one's abs.

"People always think you get this just by doing crunches but actually, you need to do intense cardio to burn the fat," advises Sol, a 30-year-old [Muay Thai](#) enthusiast.

Just keep moving! Keep your stomach tight and flat as much as possible during the exercises. This helps strengthen and develop the ab muscles better.

Perfect that [posture](#)

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