

Abdominal Myths

MYTH #1: Training the abs will give you a flat stomach.

You simply can't spot reduce fat. When you exercise, fat is **removed from all areas of the body**. The calories expended during ab exercises are very low. If you are looking for a high calorie burner, there are better exercises. Working the abs will develop the underlying muscle, but if there is a layer of fat obscuring your "six pack" neither you nor anyone else will ever see it.

MYTH #2: The lower and upper abs are separate from one another.

The abs are **one long sheet of muscle**. They aren't separate. Any ab exercise you do is going to involve both the lower and upper abdominal areas. You can shift the emphasis more toward the lower or upper regions by performing specific exercises. To target the upper abdominal area, you use exercises that bring the chest toward the pelvic (crunch-type exercises). To target the lower abdominal region, use exercises that bring the pelvis toward the chest (reverse curls).

MYTH #3: You should perform ab exercises every day for best results.

There is no substance to this. You wouldn't think of training the biceps or the quadriceps every day -- and the abs have the almost the same percentage of "fast twitch" to "slow twitch" muscles as the biceps and the quads. If you train your muscles every day, you are going to be shortchanging yourself of results. **The muscles develop during rest.** When you train them every day, you're actually breaking down muscles. It's best to allow 48 hours for the muscle to recuperate and provide optimal results.

MYTH #4: During a crunch, you should place your hands behind your head.

You should **never** put your hands behind your head for support. When you put your hands behind your head and clasp there is a reflexive tendency to pull on the neck muscles. This puts you at a greater risk for straining the neck muscles, especially when the repetitions start getting difficult and you are fatiguing and want to get out the last few reps. The best advice is to place your hands behind your chest or **put your fists at your ears**.

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