

Just in Time for the Holidays...

Physical Therapists Offer Tips on Proper Crunching (Abs, that is)

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) recommends choosing exercises that work all of the muscles of the torso: rectus abdominis (crunches and reverse crunches), obliques (half twists/rotations), transverse abdominis (plank and V-situp) and back (plank). Follow these basics to get the most out of your abdominal workout:

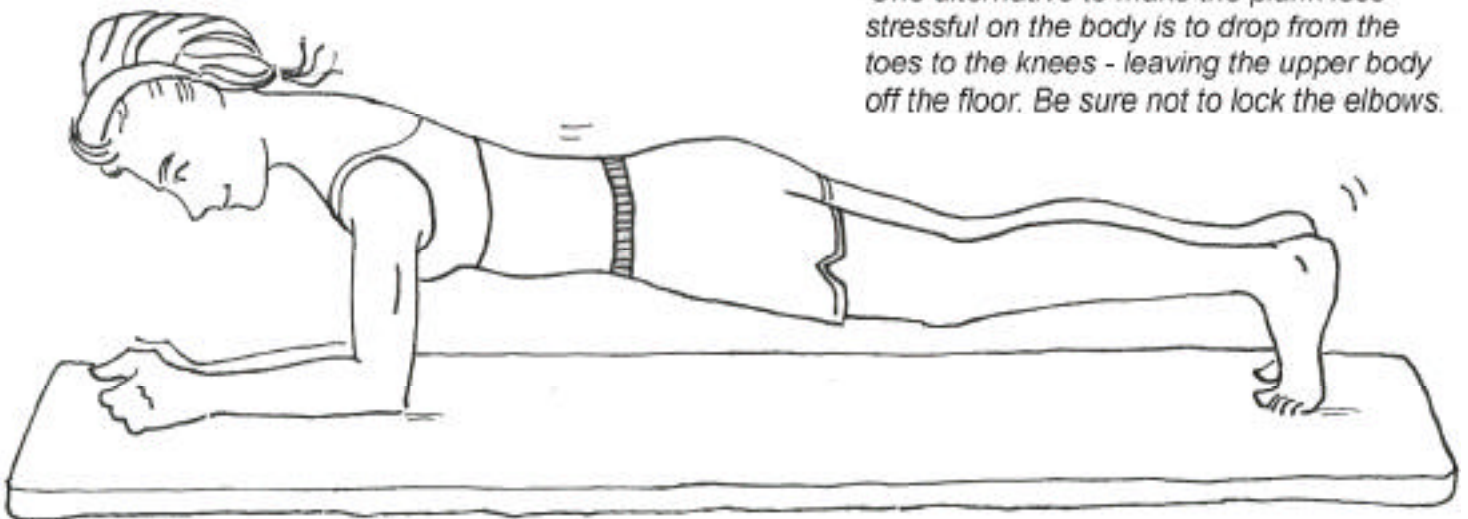
The Perfect Crunch

- Start with a manageable number of repetitions; don't go for the maximum range right away
- Place fingertips on top of head or alongside your ears; DO NOT lace fingers
- Keep the elbows out, beyond the range of peripheral vision
- Point the chin toward the ceiling
- Do 2-3 sets of 10-15 reps; be sure to maintain perfect form and rest between sets
- Remember that quality is always more important than quantity

The Perfect Plank (pictured below)

- Lie flat, face down
- Place hands at either side of the chest – as if ready to perform a pushup
- Tuck the elbows in at the sides
- Keeping the back perfectly flat, push up onto toes and elbows so that the body is off of the floor, with the elbows and toes acting as support*
- Keep the abdominals pulled in by visualizing your navel pressing up into your spine
- Aim to maintain a normal breathing pattern and hold this position for 10 - 60 seconds
- Rest, lie flat, then repeat twice

** One alternative to make the plank less stressful on the body is to drop from the toes to the knees - leaving the upper body off the floor. Be sure not to lock the elbows.*



Proper form for the "Plank" – an exercise that works the abdominal muscles and improves the strength of the back and gluteal muscles

**For more information about how to take good care of your body,
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