

Debunking the Ab Myth - Learn the Truth About Abdominal Muscles

Copyright Greg Gillies

Weight Loss and Getting Great Abs

September 29, 2005

Ab training has been done to death but it's time to take another look. Why? Because people are still training their abs wrong so all that ab training information must not be doing the job. Is there anything out there in the fitness world suffering from more misinformation than how to get great abs?

Let's set the record straight on ab training right now and give you the real information you need so you can say no to the next infomercial ab machine and yes to actual abs.

One of the big myths of ab training is spot reducing. Many people have the mindset of wanting to lose their stomach. They aren't worried about their arms, or back or legs so they embark on a program heavy on crunches and light on everything else.

This type of spot reducing ab program won't work. Endless crunches will not melt away the fat from your midsection. It just doesn't work that way. And despite the "burn" of high rep ab exercises, you barely burn any calories while doing those endless crunches.

Your fat burning time is best spent elsewhere on more effective training. High rep crunches don't work the ab muscle intensely enough to develop it, which is what you need to do. So endless high rep crunches fail on both counts - poor muscle building and poor fat burning. Two thumbs down as the cliché goes.

Another important key to understand is that the abs are a muscle and should be trained as such. Why would you train your abs in a radically different fashion compared to all your other muscles? Yet this is what most people do. You don't need high reps and lots of sets to work your abs. This just leads to overtraining.

Yes, abs are a more endurance oriented muscle so slightly higher reps may be more effective. Think about how you train your calves. Even though you may perform higher rep sets than you would on your bench press, you need to focus on increasing the resistance. And keep your reps per set to 25 or less

You should be increasing the weights on ab exercises, just like your other exercises. The stronger your abs, the better they will look when the fat is stripped away. Ever see a really thin guy with a flat stomach but no abs? The abs haven't been trained and aren't developed enough to stand out even when the fat is stripped away.

Sometimes the most effective ab training program you can use is one in which you don't train the abs. What the heck do I mean by this? Well, your abs get a lot of indirect work from other exercises so you really won't need more than a couple of hard sets of weighted crunches to work your abs.

Your abs are a factor in exercises such as squats, deadlifts, seated or standing presses, dumbbell pullovers, pulldowns, etc. Don't believe me? Next time you work out, do a few hard sets of standing stiff armed pushdowns on the lat machine and tell me your abs aren't sore the next day. I did them yesterday and my abs are more sore than my back today.

In fact, some of my favorite ab exercises aren't even considered ab exercises. These include heavy high rep squats and deadlifts, stiff-arm pushdowns, tricep pushdowns, and cross-bench dumbbell pullovers.

If you want to develop a flat stomach with your abs visible, you need to treat your abs like a muscle and train that way. And you need to strip away the fat with a proper training and nutrition program designed around total fat loss, not trying to spot reduce through endless crunches.

Here are four more ab training myths you need to be aware of so you can develop an effective ab training routine that gives you results.

1 - Training your abs consistently will eventually give you the flat stomach or six-pack that you want.

No. It's not gonna happen if your abs are covered by a layer of body fat and doing endless sets of ab exercises is not the way to rid yourself of that excess body fat.

2 - Train your abs everyday for best results.

Again, no. Your abs are a muscle, just like your chest, lats, arms and so on. You should train your abs just like these other muscles, with progressive resistance and high intensity - then allow them to rest and recover. Never train your abs more than 3 days a week. I know I've mentioned this a few times already and that's because it's extremely important and too many people don't make the connection.

3 - You need to do hundreds or reps and feel the burn to get great abs.

Again the answer is no. The abs are a muscle just like I mentioned above. To get six pack abs you need to strip off the fat, but you also need to build the abs to get them to really pop out.

If the muscle isn't developed, you'll just have a flat stomach but no abs. The name of the game is progressive resistance for sets of 8 - 25 reps, just like your other muscles. This also helps to prevent injuries. If you weight train with exercises like squats and deadlifts, you're strengthening your lower back with heavy resistance. If you don't do the same for your abs, you'll develop a muscle imbalance in your core, which could lead to injury.

4 - Train the abs with lots of sets and high reps to burn off stomach fat.

You guessed it. This is also false. Spot reduction just isn't going to happen as much as we'd all like it to. You can't burn fat on your stomach by doing endless crunches.

All the pieces of your routine must fit together. You need to put together a proper weight lifting program, nutrition plan, and cardio plan in order to rid your stomach of that stubborn layer of fat and bring out your abs. And you need to train your abs like a muscle, with progressive resistance, in order to be able to see those abs once you've melted the layer of fat away.

Eliminate these ab training myths from your routine will take you a long way toward finally getting the abs you know you deserve. Stop being frustrated by a lack of progress and start seeing results!