



Is Doing Abs a Waste of Time?

By Michael Boyle

I can't even tell you how often I hear someone at the end of the workout say something like "I need to do more abs; I want to get that six-pack." The truth is that passing on a six-pack is a better way to get a six-pack than six hundred sit-ups. The key to abdominal definition is the visibility of the abdominal musculature, not the strength of the muscles.

You can do one million sit-ups, crunches or whatever exercise you want and it will have no effect on abdominal definition. When people ask me the best exercise for abs I tell them table push-ups. It usually takes a few minutes for them to get it. It's not a joke, it's the truth. If you want better abs, eat less and train more but, don't just train your abs.

The idea of working abs to get abs is one of the oldest misconceptions in training. This goes back to the idea of spot reduction. Spot reduction has never worked and will never work. The research has been done over and over and the answer is always the same. You can't decrease the fat layer on a particular area by working that area. That means that the guys doing sit-ups to lose abdominal fat and the lady sitting on the adductor (inner thigh) machine are both wasting their time. Good total body work is, was, and always will be the key to fat loss.

Want better abdominal definition? Finish every workout with some hard interval training instead of extra sit-ups or crunches. Interval training or what is currently called High Intensity Interval Training (abbreviated HIIT) is the real key to fat loss and the resulting definition. Interval training burns more calories than steady state aerobic training and because it is a sprint program you get a sprinter's body.

Abdominal training may reduce the diameter of the waistline but, will not do anything to reduce body fat. The truth is there are lots of good reasons to do abdominal work or core training as we now like to call it. A strong core (strong abs) is one of the keys in the prevention of back pain. A strong core will help you look better and improve performance in a host of sports but, sit-ups or any other abdominal exercise will not reduce body fat.

Another good tip: Don't just do 100's of crunches. A good abdominal or core program is a lot more than crunches. In fact a great deal of your core work should be isometric exercises like front planks and side planks. One of the major functions of the core musculature is the prevention of motion. What does that mean? It means that the abdominals' are great stabilizers. Work on the stability function, not just on flexion and extension.