

SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENTS SECTION

Abdominal exercises made simple—Part II: Self-care ☆

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Abdominal wall training is a key to preventing recurrent lower back pain and enhancing athletic performance. Traditional exercises such as sit-ups have been replaced with safer alternatives such as the dying bug. The emphasis is on spine stability, form, endurance, and proper breathing. To borrow a page from Pilates, the quality of the movement (e.g. coordination) is more important than the quantity (sets/repetitions/weight).

For each exercise perform 8–12 slow repetitions on each side. This type of training should be performed twice a day.

Marching dying bug on foam roll

- Begin with your arms stretching upwards to the ceiling holding a medicine ball (Figure 1a).
- Keep your lower front ribs pressed down while breathing normally (Figure 1b).
- March by raising one foot at a time (Figure 1c).

Dying bug with twist

- Assume the basic dying bug position with a medium size medicine ball in your hands.

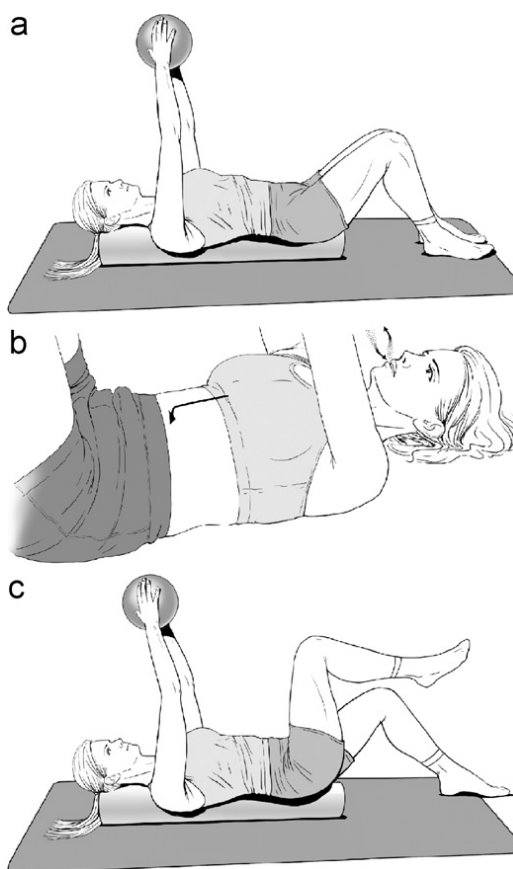


Figure 1 Marching dying bug on foam roll: (a) Start position, (b) Pressing ribs down, and (c) Marching.

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Figure 2 Dying bug with twist.

- Move your arms and legs in opposite directions while keeping your core braced and breathing normally (Figure 2).

Arms overhead on foam roll

- With your feet on the ground hold a medium size medicine ball in your hands.
- Keep your lower front ribs pressed down (isometric crunch position) while breathing normally, then let it go (Figures 3a,b).
- Now, hold the isometric crunch and slowly raise your arms overhead.
- Test that you are holding the crunch by letting it go and feeling if your back comes off the ground and ribs move up.
- Be sure you keep the crunch—back flat and ribs down—while moving your arms back and forth (Figure 3c).

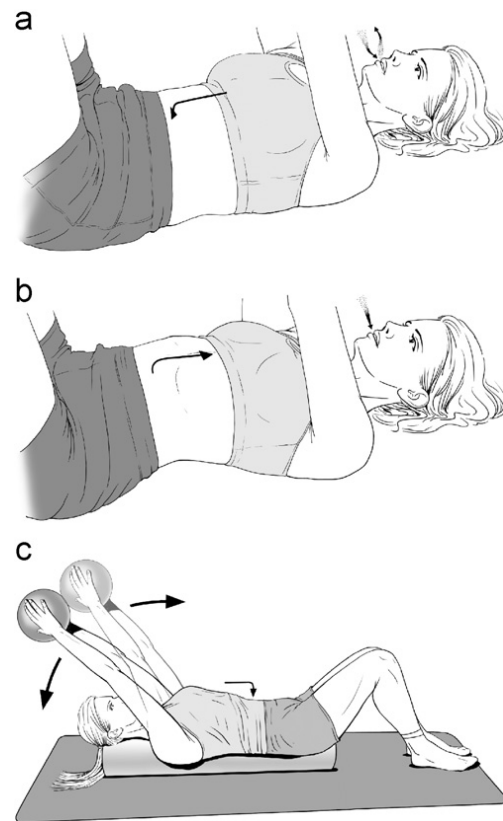


Figure 3 Arms overhead on foam roll: (a) Pressing ribs down (correct), (b) Elevating ribs (incorrect), and (c) Exercise.

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