

Functional abdominal training

Most people think of sit-ups or crunches when they want to train their abdominal muscles. While these exercises will train the abdominals they are not necessarily going to improve abdominal function during actual functional tasks such as pushing, pulling, throwing, hitting, etc. In order to train the 'core' muscles of the abdomen functionally whole-body movements involving rotation are needed.

Your starting position:

- Lay on your back with your ankles crossed.

The exercise:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath.
- Turn your hips to one side while gently turning your head in the opposite direction.
- Turn back and forth slowly and smoothly.

Twister board

Your starting position:

Stand on the twister board.

The exercise:

- Try to make the board rotate back and forth.
- Keep your elbows bent and shoulders relaxed.
- Throw your hips side to side while alternately punching with your arms.
- Try to keep the board from turning in either direction.

Duration: 30–60 seconds.

Frequency: twice a day.

See Figure 1.



Fig.1 Twister board.

Yoga twists

(a) On your back

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- Synchronize the head and hip movements so they are always moving in opposite directions.

Repetitions: 5–10 then switch ankles.

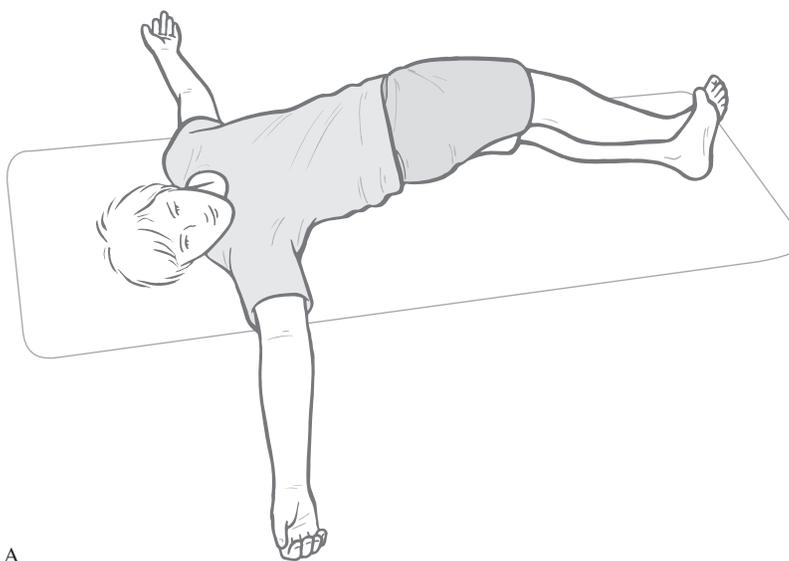
Frequency: Twice a day.

See Figure 2A.

(b) On your stomach

Your starting position:

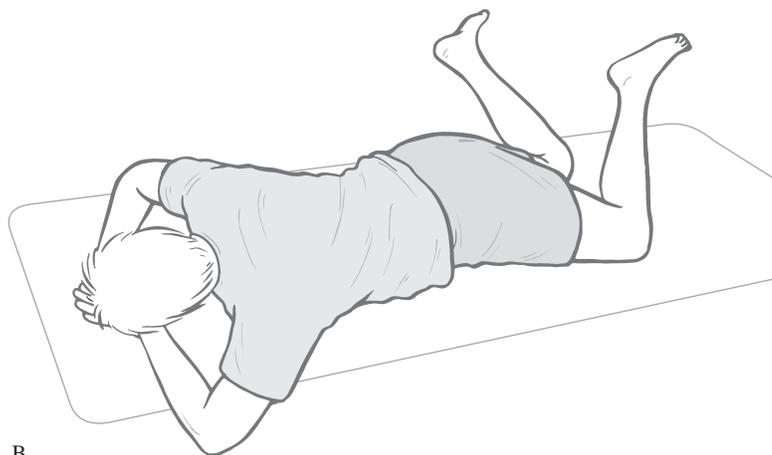
- Lay on your stomach without turning your head and with your knees bent to a 90° angle.
- Either place a small folded towel under your forehead or put your nose and mouth between both hands.



A

The exercise:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath.
- Turn your hips to one side while gently turning your head in the same direction as your feet are moving.
- Turn back and forth slowly and smoothly.
- Synchronize the head and hip movement so you are always looking towards your feet.
- Perform both with your knees and ankles together and apart.



B

Repetitions: 5–10.

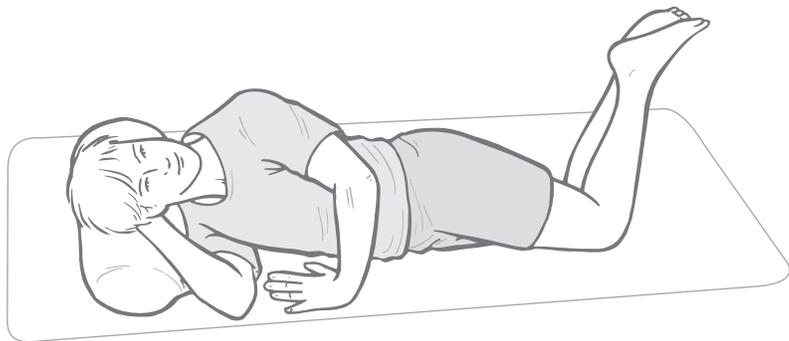
Frequency: Twice a day.

See Figure 2B.

(c) Side lying

Your starting position:

- Lay on your side with your knees bent 90°.
- Support the back of your head in your palm so that your eyes are looking upwards.
- If your neck is uncomfortable place a rolled up towel or thin pillow under your neck.



C

Fig. 2 Yoga twists.

The exercise:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath.
- Turn your abdomen/waist toward the floor so that your feet lift up as high as possible.

Repetitions: 5–10, then switch sides and repeat.

Frequency: Twice a day.

See Figure 2C.

Dead-bug

Your starting position:

- Lay on your back.
- Hold a 3–5 lb weight in your hands.
- Lift your legs up so that both your hips and knees are bent to a 90° angle.
- Stretch your arms towards the ceiling.

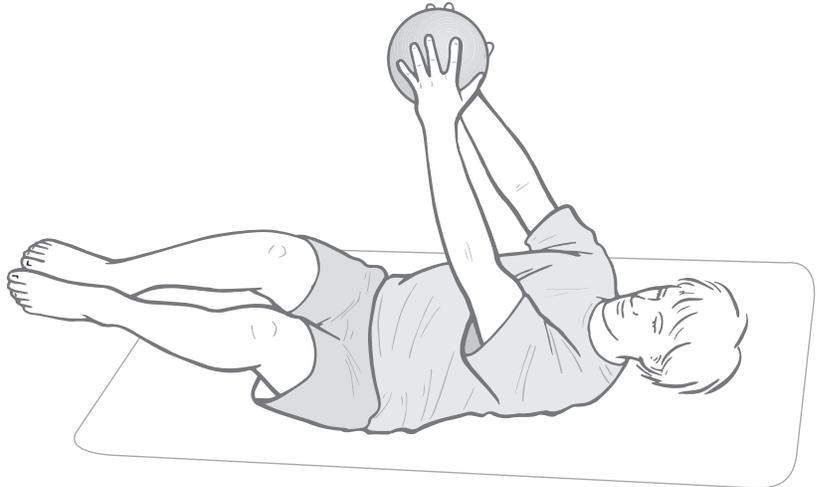


Fig. 3 Dead-bug.

The exercise:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath.
- Slowly turn your thighs a few inches to one side while moving your arms in the opposite direction.
- Try to avoid having your back arch up from the floor.
- Repeat back and forth.

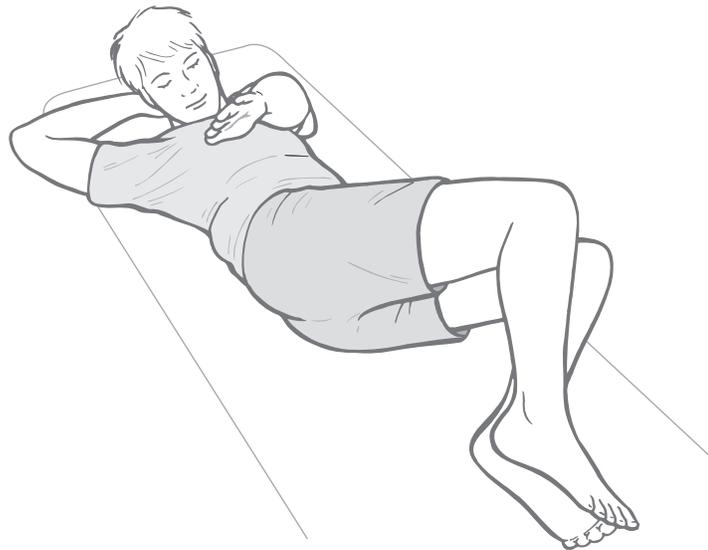


Fig. 4 Oblique crunch.

Repetitions: 10–20.

Frequency: Twice a day.

See Figure 3.

Oblique crunch

Your starting position:

- Lay on your left side with your knees bent 90°.
- Without turning your legs or hips roll your upper body so that both shoulders are on the floor.
- Support your neck in your left hand.
- Straighten your left arm in front of you so that your hand points across your right thigh.

The exercise:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath.
- Slowly lift your left shoulder off the floor in the direction of your left thigh.
- Keep your neck relaxed and stay balanced on your right hip.

- Lift up until you feel your left shoulder blade is off the floor.
- You should feel the muscle ‘burn’ in your right upper and outer abdominal region.

Repetitions: 10–12.

Frequency: Twice a day.

See Figure 4.