

# Six Pack Abs Experts Reveal The Top 10 Worst Abdominal Exercises

**By Arnel Ricafranca**

The six-pack, which is also known as an "eight-pack" is the result of well-developed abdominal muscle and tissue made visible by having a low level of body fat. A six pack does not consist of six muscles. It is one muscle separated into sections by the linea alba, which runs vertically and separates the rectus abdominus into a right and left sides, the horizontal lines are the tendinous inscriptions

There are a large number of individuals who seek "great six pack abs," and the number is escalating. Something else that is escalating is the number of flawed ab training advice. The wrong advice will only lead to mistakes and possible injuries. The most important and valuable parts of a good abdominal exercise routine is the usage of the core muscles. A large number of workouts and routine offerings pay no attention to the core muscles.

The deep lying transverses; part of your core muscles act to stabilize, balance, and support movement. The transverse acts in the same way as a corset, and is one of the primary contributors to the ever popular "flat tummy." Focusing on the external muscles alone, neglecting the core muscles could lead to a look of abdominal distension.

Wayne Westcott, PhD., Fitness Research Director at the South Shore YMCA in Boston states two primary concerns when considering an abdominal exercise routine. According to Westcott, "in a routine where any abdominal exercise movement places stress on the back, the risks outweigh the potential benefits. In a nation where 80% of the population has back problems, caution is required. Secondly, anything that doesn't involve a range of movement of the abdominal muscles against a reasonable resistance is not going to be effective."

When constructing your six pack abs program, you want to be sure you limit the exercise movements using only the ones that are safe as well as effective. Peter Francis, Ph.D., of the Biomechanics Lab at San Diego State University, compared 13 common abdominal exercise alternatives. His conclusion was that ab crunches on a stability ball proved to be the most effective and safe. Francis also ranked the exercises in order, and some of the best selling infomercial products, landed at the bottom of the list. It is now clear that the solution to getting a six pack abs or weight loss does not come from a piece of equipment or machinery. So, in order to help you stay clear of ineffective six pack ab routines, here are the 10 worst abdominal exercises you should be sure to avoid.

## 1. **Electronic Ab Stimulation**

It's hard to turn on the television on a Saturday morning nowadays without being flooded with offerings for electronic ab stimulators and weight loss devises. They

are all usually something so simple too. Many of these infomercials tell you that all you have to do is turn on the device and it will do the work for you. Respected researcher, Dr. John Porcari, Professor, Department of Exercise and Sport Science at University of Wisconsin, says that electronic stimulation devices are certainly not the six-pack solution the ads promise. He has said, "All these machines are doing is telling your muscles to contract, causing what often equates to a painful contraction without fully activating all the neural and chemical signals that contribute to muscular development." Electronic Ab stimulation machine does not belong in a six pack abs workout routine.

## **2. Bent Over Twist**

Another well known exercise that is used to "work the waistline," is referred to as a "bent over twist" This is done by holding a light bar or a broomstick behind your neck with your arms outstretched, bending forward from the waist so your upper body is parallel with the ground, begin twisting from left to right. While this movement definitely requires some involvement of the obliques, the primary muscles being worked are the spinal erectors, which strain to maintain force to keep your body flexed and stable at that 90-degree angle. A large amount of strain is placed on ligaments and connective tissue. Doing this exercise continuously over a period of time can gradually wear away soft tissue which can lead to serious back problems.

## **3. Straight leg double leg raises**

This exercise can be done on the floor or at the end of a bench, but no matter where you perform it, the abdominal muscles have very little involvement. It is your Psoas muscles that are doing most of the work. The Psoas muscles attach at the lumbar spine and the femur, which means the movement of this exercise places unnecessary and unwanted stress on the lumbar spine, including your low back discs, and spinal ligaments. Damian Stephens, Instructor for the National Council of Strength & Fitness in Miami, states, "In order to effectively, safely, and optimally target the abdominals, the exerciser should maintain a posterior pelvic tilt. In a straight leg double leg raise, the pelvis assumes a position where the pull of the psoas muscles increases the lordotic curve which the place most back problems occur in the general population.

## **4. Straight Legged Sit-ups**

A common mistake while doing sit-ups is performing them with your legs straight out in front of you perpendicular to your upper body. Also, you may remember back in high school when you had someone hold your feet down as you performed the sit-up. This is only causing unnecessary pressure to the lower spine, and the jerking movement used to lift your upper body off the floor can result in injury. You are much better off doing sit-ups which have the feet unsupported, knees bent, while slowly raising your upper body.

## 5. **The ab wheel**

The ab wheel appears to be a great device for burning the stubborn fat around the abs. People who have claimed to use it explain that they "really feel it." People must be aware that "feeling it" in the abs, doesn't mean the device is giving you results. When using the "wheel" or doing any rolling movement, little range of motion is being conducted by the abs. While the "ab wheel" may have its benefits when being used in an advanced workout routine for a very conditioned athlete, it is not the best route for the unconditioned user. This device often results in low back pain. This means that if you have low shoulder and upper back strength, this movement can put the lower back in a somewhat dangerous position.

## 6. **Seated Spinal Twist Machine**

These machines are the ones found in well-equipped health clubs. They allow the exerciser to flex the lumbar spine while twisting at the waist. This forces a great deal of pressure placed upon the spinal ligaments. The obliques can be worked without any machine. Again the machines and devices are not the safe way to go about your routine

## 7. **Improper use of the Nautilus abdominal machines**

I'm sure you all have heard of the popular Nautilus abdominal crunch machine it has been a favorite of serious exercisers for years. Now don't get me wrong, this machine can be a good thing if used properly. The problem lies within the user of this machine. The Nautilus can provide you with an effective ab workout, but one common mistake made by exercisers is not having parts positioned properly, such as the seat. If the body is not properly aligned, the hip flexors wind up doing the most work while putting pressure on the discs of the lumbar spine.

## 8. **Ab rocker**

This is one of those exercise devices sold on those infomercials I talked about before. Most infomercial fitness products, present their machine as an easy way to achieve quick results. The idea of this device is that a rocking motion can be used to "smooth" the stomach and waistline. Out of the 13 exercises ranked in the study by Peter Francis, mentioned earlier, he proved that the ab rocker is 80% less effective than the traditional ab crunch. Let's not forget about those other offers for devices that "swing" "glide" and "tighten" the abs to give you those lean six pack abs you've longed for. Try to steer clear of these also.

## 9. **Roman Chair Sit-ups**

This movement takes place when the exerciser's thighs are parallel with the floor, and the upper body, beginning at 90 degrees to the lower body, lowers down backward, sometimes beyond the point where the spinal vertebrae are aligned.

This is an exercise you will definitely "feel" in your abdominal region, resulting in a full extension of the rectus abdominus, return movement is when bringing your body down backward, the hip flexors are being stressed. This exercise causes compressive forces to be placed upon the spine when it flexes or extends beyond the considered safe limits.

#### **10. Two-dumbbell side bend**

When side bends are performed properly they can target the obloquies, holding two dumbbells cause the resistance. It is a common belief that side bends will reduce the waist. Without the proper nutrition, additional aerobic exercises, and resistance exercises for all major muscle groups, side bends will not and can not reduce fat. If you develop a muscle underneath fatty deposits, you may actually INCREASE waist size.

## **About the Author**

Arnel Ricafranca is a six pack abs expert, fitness boot camp coach, author, and a motivational speaker. He has authored and co-authored several books including The Ultimate Weight Loss Success Strategies For Busy Men and Women Over 40 available online at [www.elitefitnessexperts.com](http://www.elitefitnessexperts.com).

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