

EXERCISE THE BEST OF ABDOMINALS

IN PURSUIT OF A PERFECT MIDSECTION

APRIL 2009

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MUSCLE BULLETIN

HEART RATE MONITORING FOR BETTER FITNESS

The centerpiece of most gym cardio equipment these days is the ability to track your exertion via built-in heart rate monitor systems. The idea is that if you are to train in your "fat-burning zone" or aim for a high-intensity workout, the best way to gauge your success is by monitoring your heart rate. This is the most accurate method of scrutinizing your exercise efficiency.

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But if you're one of those guys who takes to the great outdoors for your cardio, it's a little hard to check your carotid artery while jogging at a fast pace. Enter the IRONMAN Road Trainer Heart Rate Monitor from Timex. The wristwatch helps you watch your time on the road while monitoring your heart beats per minute, target heart rate zones, average heart rate for your workout, time in desired training zone, calories burned and more. It also contains a 50-lap memory with average heart rate per lap.

Remember, training without any recordkeeping is haphazard at best, and completely inefficient at worst. If you're going to put in the time doing cardio, be sure to get the most out of your workouts. For more information on the IRONMAN watches, log onto timex.com.



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PHOTO: STEVE DOWNS

The survey also revealed ideal locales for romantic walks. Walks along the beach, specifically Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, are considered to be the most romantic places to walk, followed by the River Walk in San Antonio and Central Park in New York City.

The American Heart Association greatly encourages walking because it has the lowest dropout rate out of any physical activity, and it can be done anywhere, at any time. Studies have shown that walking can help reduce stress, provide more energy and enhance mental well-being. Other research shows that 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day can greatly reduce your risk of coronary disease, improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels, help maintain body weight and lower your risk

of obesity and reduce the risk of osteoporosis, breast and colon cancer and Type 2 diabetes. Additionally, for every hour of regular, vigorous exercise you perform, such as very brisk walking, some adults may gain two more hours of life expectancy, according to another study. For more information about starting a walking program, visit heart.org/start.

walking with their ears in front of their bodies and shoulders in front of their hearts. "If people slouch, their stomachs pooch," she says. For better posture, align your ears over your shoulders, shoulders over your hips, hips over knees and knees over ankles. It also helps to draw your navel to your spine.

Tip #2: Think whole-body exercise. Do not train the body in isolation, according to Neporent. "People have this misconception that the best way to strengthen the abs is to get on the floor and do a thousand crunches," Barrett adds. "You have to see the abs as a 360-degree core. You want to develop strength and flexibility around that core. Fitness needs to be intelligent. Do slow, high-quality exercise."

A good exercise to accomplish this is seated rotations: Sit up, bend your knees and legs together and place your arms across your chest or in front of you. Tuck your tailbone and roll back slightly as you alternate rotating the spine right and left.

Tip #3: Examine your diet and digestion. Eat less and move more. "You need to burn off more calories than you take in to reduce bodyfat," Neporent says. No matter how many ab exercises you perform, they will all be in vain if you have excess bodyfat covering them up.

Tip #4: Props are optional (i.e., stability balls, Bosu balls, straps and bands). Although these devices may help work your core, you don't need them for a trim midsection. "Gimmicks or fancy gym memberships aren't necessary," according to Barrett. "You don't need space, you don't need sneakers, you don't need fancy clothes." Take a walk in a park, rake some leaves, walk your dog, go snowboarding — but whatever you do, be sure to keep good posture.

Tip #5: Take it slow. Life doesn't come with fast fixes (and the ones that do are temporary!). Barrett tells WebMD to plan your goal and accomplish it with a slow and steady progression. Expect setbacks, roadblocks and frustration. But abdominal rewards come with consistency.

Tip #6: Set realistic goals. Your genes may play a role in your physique. "Sometimes, even very thin people can't get washboard abs," Neporent says. This doesn't mean you can't improve your musculature, you just have to be realistic. You may not be able to look exactly like Tony Little, but you won't stand a chance if you can't get your hand out of the cookie jar.

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