

About.com Sports Medicine

The Plank Abdominal Exercise for Core Strength

The plank abdominal exercise helps improve core strength and stability

By Elizabeth Quinn, About.com Guide Updated July 15, 2010

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Add these core strengthening exercises to your ab workout for a new way to build strength and stability.

The Plank Abdominal Exercise

The basic plank exercise, also called a hover, is the starting place if you want to improve your core strength and stability. Here's how to do it right.



Plank Exercise

E. Quinn

- Begin in the plank position (see photo 1) with your forearms and toes on the floor.
- Keep your torso straight and rigid and your body in a straight line from ears to toes with no sagging or bending.
- Your head is relaxed and you should be looking at the floor.
- Hold this position for 10 seconds to start.
- Over time work up to 30, 45 or 60 seconds.

Plank with Leg Lift

Start in the same plank position (photo 1) as above with your forearms and toes on the floor.

- Slowly raise one leg 5-8 inches off the floor (photo 2)
- Count to two and slowly lower your leg to the floor.
- Switch legs and repeat.
- Do about 2-3 sets of 10 reps.

Plank with Arm Lift

- Start in the same plank position (photo 1) as above.
- Carefully shift your weight to your right forearm.
- Extend your left arm straight out in front of you.
- Hold 3 seconds while keeping your core tight.
- Slowly bring your arm back to starting position.
- Switch arms and repeat.
- Do 2-3 sets of 10 reps.

Modified Plank with Leg Lift

To make this exercise a bit easier, you can perform the movement on your hands, rather than your elbows.

Also See: [The Side Plank Exercise](#)¹

[Core Muscle Strength and Stability Testing](#)²

The Plank exercise can be used as the basis for assessing your core strength. Sports coach, Brian Mackenzie, created this test as a way to determine an individual's current core strength and stability and then to monitor progress over time. Learn how to do the [Core Muscle Strength and Stability Test](#).³

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