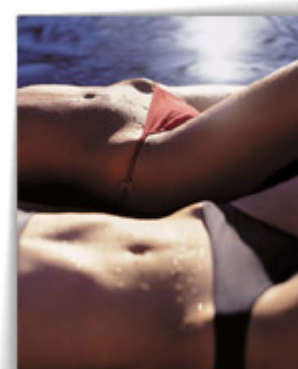




A Flatter Stomach Just 3 Steps Away

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When it comes to tightening your abs, are you buying into fact or fiction?

Unless you've been schooled in the proper ways to exercise, it can sometimes be difficult weeding through the best ways to get a fit and firm figure.

In fact, if you aren't careful, lack of results is the least of your worries. You could be setting yourself up for a workout-ending injury!

In-demand personal trainer and *Look Great Naked* (Prentice Hall Press) author Brad Schoenfeld is here to set the record straight when it comes to the tricks of the toning trade. With his expert help you can be well on your way to fabulous abs by the end of summer.

"Every day I hear people buying into workout myths," he tells Diets from his home base in New York City. "I think more than any other muscle there are myths associated with the abs. Most people train the abs wrong or train them too frequently."

According to Schoenfeld, these are the four most common myths associated with toning that tummy:

MYTH #1: Training the abs will give you a flat stomach.

You simply can't spot reduce fat. When you exercise, fat is removed from all areas of the body. The calories expended during ab exercises are very low. If you are looking for a high calorie burner, there are better exercises. Working the abs will develop the underlying muscle, but if there is a layer of fat obscuring your "six pack" neither you nor anyone else will ever see it.

MYTH #2: The lower and upper abs are separate from one another.

The abs are one long sheet of muscle. They aren't separate. Any ab exercise you do is going to involve both the lower and upper abdominal areas. You can shift the emphasis more toward the lower or upper regions by performing specific exercises. To target the upper abdominal area, you use exercises that bring the chest toward the pelvic (crunch-type exercises). To target the lower abdominal region, use exercises that bring the pelvis toward the chest (reverse curls).

MYTH #3: You should perform ab exercises every day for best results.

There is no substance to this. You wouldn't think of training the biceps or the quadriceps every day -- and the abs have the almost the same percentage of "fast twitch" to "slow twitch" muscles as the biceps and the quads. If you train your muscles every day, you are going to be shortchanging yourself of results. The muscles develop during rest. When you train them every day, you're actually breaking down muscles. It's best to allow 48 hours for the muscle to recuperate and provide optimal results.

MYTH #4: During the crunch, you should place your hands behind your head for support.

You should never put your hands behind your head for support. When you put your hands behind your head and clasp there is a reflexive tendency to pull on the neck muscles. This puts you at a greater risk for straining the neck muscles, especially when the repetitions start getting difficult and you are fatiguing and want to get out the last few reps. The best advice is to place your hands behind your chest or put your fists at your ears.

The good news is that with the proper guidance from Schoenfeld, you'll have a much-coveted stomach in no time -- provided you keep the proper form when working out and [follow a healthy diet](#).

"You don't get the proper results if you don't have the proper training protocol," Schoenfeld says. "It diminishes the results. You can also overtrain and not get as good results. If you do the proper routine, the abs develop very quickly."

Schoenfeld emphasizes that to achieve a super-sexy stomach you first have to shed the layer of fat covering the muscles. The best one-two punch: [good nutrition](#) and regular physical activity. Without proper nutrition, you aren't going to see the fruits of your labor, he says.

For an extra boost of fat burning Schoenfeld advocates an aerobic activity. The combination of a healthy diet and cardio exercise will speed up your progress and help burn extra fat.

In this eDiets exclusive, Schoenfeld shares an abdominal routine from *Look Great Naked*. He suggests performing the following three exercises as one giant set. Do 15 to 20 reps of the toe touch. Without resting, do 15 to 20 reps of the reverse curl. Then do 15 to 20 reps of the twisting curl. Rest 30 seconds and repeat the giant set two more times.

Toe Touch

Begin by lying on the floor with arms and legs straight up, perpendicular to your body. Slowly curl your torso up and forward, raising your hands as close to your toes as possible. Contract your abs and then reverse direction, returning to the starting position.

Reverse Curl

Begin by lying back on the floor. With your hands at your sides, raise your butt as high as possible while keeping your upper back pressed to the floor. Contract your abs and then reverse direction, returning to the starting position.

Twisting Crunch

Begin by lying face up on the floor with your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Your thighs should be perpendicular to the ground and your hands should be folded across your chest. Slowly raise your shoulders up and forward toward your chest, twisting your body to the right. Feel a contraction in your abdominal muscles and then slowly reverse direction, returning to the start position. After performing the desired number of repetitions, repeat the process, twisting your body to the left.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *When it comes to exercise, there are many viewpoints and beliefs. eDiets has its very own fitness program. However, from time to time, we highlight programs and exercises developed by Brad Schoenfeld and other well-known fitness pros. It is possible you will see contradictions from one story to another.*

To get your very own copy of *Look Great Naked* [click here](#). To find out more about how to look great naked, [click here](#). And to learn more about the *Look Great Naked* video [click here](#).

