

## Simple Tips for Cover Model Abs.

Abdominals are easily one of the most sought-after body parts to be in fantastic shape. After all, abdominal definition makes any physique more impressive. Take a look at bodybuilders in their off-season and they just don't look any good, even though they are the most muscle bound group of individuals. On the other hand, even a slim person can look fantastic just by having a good set of abs.

Chances are you want to improve your abdominal definition, who doesn't? They are one of the rarest muscle groups to develop properly for a multitude of reasons so if you feel like you are struggling to do yourself justice, don't worry- help is on it's way.

I have had to troubleshoot client's abdominal programmes since I started as a trainer and the problems can lie in many different areas, this is why getting fantastic abs can be such hard work even though you train them using advanced techniques. Here are some tips which range from the glaringly obvious to the much less acknowledged.

- Your body fat level is too high. This is common sense, as with any muscle- if it is covered by fat the level of definition is lower. If you want to reveal your abdominals you need to strip that layer of fat off. (In my experience a skinfold reading of below 10 should leave you with well defined abs).

- You spend too long training your abdominals. Research has shown that abdominal training for strength is only effective to a point and after a well-planned 6 week cycle you will have already come to the end of that. Squats and deadlifts done properly are proven to be two of the best exercises for abdominal stimulation.

- When training them directly, you need to do them in the right order. Upper abdominals are usually more of a strong point than lower abs therefore work your lower abdominals first, obliques second and upper abdominals last. (Upper and lower abdominals refer to portions of the rectus abdominis/six pack muscle which although is one muscle, is segmentally innervated and therefore different fibres can be focused on to a degree). This means leg lowering, leg raising or reverse crunch movements come before rotation and side bending which then comes before normal crunching.

- Train your abdominals last. You do not want to fatigue them before performing movements which rely heavily on the abs. Doing crunches before squats would leave you with lesser results in both areas.

- As you can focus on different sections of the abs it makes sense to train them separately. An easy way to build your abdominals is to perform a few exercises in a circuit fashion. Choose one exercise for the lower abs, one for the obliques and one for the upper abdominals and perform them back-to-back with little rest. 10-15 minutes of this should be more than enough for most people- try it and get back to me!!

- Vary the reps. All muscles require stimulation to grow. You don't go to the gym and perform sets of 50 squats or deadlifts so why would you do it for your abs? If you have trained with the same reps for a while, change them significantly and you should make further gains.

- Inflammation in your stomach can lead to bloating which can then make it harder to stimulate your abs (referred to as lazy abs). If you are one in the majority that do not have a healthy digestive system it will compromise your physique. Inflammation in the gut can be caused by parasites, bacterial infections, food intolerances, leaky gut syndrome, constipation etc. Improving gut health often improves your physique. The stronger your immune system is the faster you will lose fat and build muscle. Solutions can sometimes be as simple as supplementing with fibre or probiotics. I have seen people who cannot lose fat on their stomach due to the lack of integrity in their gut so do not overlook this point.

Truth be told, a lot of people will go through life never having a visible set of abdominals, don't allow yourself to be one of them. Each of these points is a solution within itself so recognise which ones you have been neglecting and work on them until you have a set of abs worthy of the cover of your favourite fitness magazine!