

# OPTIMAL ABDOMINAL MUSCLE BUILDERS

**1. Floor Crunch:** Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Place hands so that your fingers are by your ears (rather than cupping your head in your hands). Contract the abs and curl forward to lift both shoulders off the floor without tucking your chin to your chest (keep chin pointing up). Hold for two counts and then lower. Do two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions.



**2. Bicycle Crunch:** Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and hands on the sides of your head. Contract your abdominal muscles as you bring your knees up to a 45-degree angle. Straighten and bend your knees as you alternate crossing and touching right elbow to left knee, then left elbow to right knee. Do two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions for each leg.



**3. Captain's Chair:** At the gym, head to this low-tech piece of equipment to challenge the abs. Start with your forearms supported on the padded arms of the apparatus, and your legs hanging straight down. Lift your knees toward your chest by contracting the abdominals (try not to swing the legs to create the momentum) and lower them back down slowly, with control. Do two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions.



You can also do this exercise on a chair without arm rests. Sit with your hands on the sides of the chair and shift most of your body weight onto your hands (as if you were trying to lift your butt off the chair). Then, keeping your knees bent, lift your thighs up off the chair a few inches and slowly lower them back down.



## Moves That'll Help You Run Strong

These functional exercises build muscle stamina

**4. Lunge Crunch:** Start from a standing position and step forward into a lunge. In this position, the back leg will generally try to pull the pelvis into an anterior tilt (back arched, butt slightly out), just as it does during your running stride. To strengthen the abdominal muscles that help stabilize the pelvis, concentrate on contracting your abs and keeping your butt tucked under in a posterior pelvic tilt as you lunge forward. Step back with feet together again. Repeat seven to 10 times with the right leg lunging forward, then repeat seven to 10 times with the left leg.



**5. Moving Crunches** For this exercise you will practice maintaining the tightened abs and posterior pelvic tilt while in motion. Contract your abs and keep your butt tucked under as you step forward with the right foot into a lunge, and hold the contraction as you bring the left foot forward to meet the right. Then rest the abs while stepping forward with the left leg. Repeat seven to 10 times, contracting while stepping forward with the right leg and resting when stepping forward on the left leg. Then repeat seven to 10 times, contracting while stepping forward with the left leg and resting when stepping forward on the right leg. Next, while running easy, contract the abs and curl the pelvis into a posterior pelvic tilt. Hold the contraction for

about five seconds, then relax for five seconds, while continuing to run. Repeat this 10 to 20 times during a short run.



**6. Stair Drop Crunch:** Stand sideways on a step, with your right foot on the step and your left leg hanging off the side. Contract the abs and curl the pelvis into a posterior pelvic tilt (your butt should be tucked in), then raise the left hip up and lower it. Keep your right leg straight throughout the movement, which is very small and results in your foot rising and falling just an inch or two in either direction. Repeat 10 to 15 times, then switch sides and repeat 10 to 15 times with the left foot on the step and the right hip lifting up and down.

