

PLANK POWER

**Discover the 3 Minute Exercise That
Will Transform Your Body**



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INTRODUCTION

Crossfit, functional training, and Bodyweight exercises are all the buzz. They are becoming the go-to exercises for most people due to their practicality and efficiency. Why?

Bodyweight exercises require little or no equipment and do not require a gym membership or hours at the gym.

The plank is one bodyweight exercise that is top of mind for many fitness buffs and professional athletes. The Plank has become the go-to exercise for strengthening your core as well as engaging several muscle groups all at the same time. The benefits from performing the plank exercise are amazing; they involve increased flexibility, improved posture, improved balance, a stronger, flatter, and more defined abdominal area.

- **Flat, Defined Midsection:**

Performing the plank exercise will help give you a flatter, tighter belly, as it forces you to use those hard to target transverse abdominus muscles, or inner ab muscles. Because planks activate over 29 core muscles at the same time, it helps to preserve muscle mass when cutting back on calories, thus boosting your metabolism rather than slowing it down due to muscle loss. The end result is a leaner, stronger, healthier body.

- **Reduces Back Pain**

One of the most common exercises prescribed to help eliminate and prevent common back pain is the plank, and for good reason. Planking is safe, can be modified by planking on your knees, and is progressive, allowing you to increase the intensity as you get stronger. Planking strengthens your core, and can help align your spine, helping you get rid of back pain. This is because all layers of your abdominal fascia surrounding your back are targeted, as well as muscles that have become weak from a sedentary lifestyle. By performing this exercise, you strengthen all of your back muscles and consequently eliminate back pain.

- **Improves mood:**

Performing a plank helps to boost your mood. Planking stretches those tension areas in your body that often become stiff as a result of prolonged sitting. Planking will get your blood flowing, help uplift your spirit and improve your mood.

One Exercise, Many Benefits

What if there was ONE EXERCISE you could do once a day, for 1-3 minutes that would dramatically improve the quality of your life by boosting your energy, physique, mental focus, and self-esteem? This simple exercise targets over 29 muscles the second you get into position. It works your core muscles, a series of muscles located in the abdomen, pelvis and back. These muscles hold your belly in, define your abs, correct bad posture, increase your stability, prevent low back pain, and improve balance to minimize falls as we age.

Plank exercises are one of the most effective exercises one can do. Why? Because they require little time and offer the chance to achieve amazing results. Oh, one more thing.....You already know how to plank!



Plank- Crawl-Stand- Walk

Starting at just 3-6 months of age, as babies, we all begin to use our muscles against gravity by being on our belly. This prepares our bodies in developing the core strength that we need to crawl, sit, stand, and walk. As we grow, we continue to develop and move through space for more challenging activities as we learn how to play and have fun.



Planking Fun

Remember the wheelbarrow, crab and bear crawl? They are all fun and effective in helping us to gain core strength. The problem is we grow up, start a career and tend to neglect the importance of fun activities. Meanwhile, playing games like frisbee, or just going for a daily walk can help to keep our core muscles active and strong.



Planks Improve Performance

It is no surprise that so many high school and professional teams include the plank exercise in their training. Having a healthy core increases balance, builds stamina, improves reaction time, and helps us to brace for a fall, hit, or make a quick, explosive move. Whether you are a professional athlete or a weekend warrior, the one exercise that can improve your sport is the plank.



Planks are a MOM's Best Friend

If you are a mom and want to get your flat belly back fast, then you should look no further than the plank exercise. It may be the ideal post-pregnancy exercise for you.

The PLANK is the only exercise that activates your girdle muscles directly against gravity due to its position. The transverse abdominus is the primary core muscle which holds your organs in place. This is why it's hard for anyone to achieve six-pack abs without committing a ton of time to exercise. This muscle stretches out during childbirth and can be restored by just doing the plank exercise.



Plank Exercises are Ageless!

The Plank exercise benefits people across all age groups. George Hood, a 58-year-old retired marine does the plank exercise every day and holds a world record for a holding the plank position for 5 hours, 15 minutes, and fifteen seconds in 2016. Plank training is both physically and mentally challenging – something he has become accustomed to as a marine. Try the exercise for just one minute, and you'll appreciate the impact it will make on your overall physical appearance.

Planks can also benefit an older crowd not looking to break world records. Planking everyday will help in maintaining elasticity in your bones, joints, and ligaments as you age. Many falls and consequent injuries in the elderly happen because their body loses definition and dexterity. Planking can help preserve the elasticity needed to prevent these injuries.



Planks Replace Sit-ups for our Military

In the past, core strength was synonymous with sit-up exercises. The sit-up has had a long reign as the gold standard in improving abdominal strength, not to mention achieving a slimmer waistline. Then came the crunch, which effectively isolated the rectus abdominis muscles with less chance of low back injury and measures against the traditional sit-up, which elicits compensatory hip flexor muscle activation.

However, recent clinical studies suggest that sit-ups can cause lower back pain. An article published in the Daily Mail notes that the U.S. Army is phasing out sit-ups from the Army Physical Fitness Test and regular training programs because it results in injuries. A lot of people continue to shy away from the traditional sit-up exercise and prefer to seek alternative means of engaging their core muscles, of which the plank is a safer option.



Plank Exercises are like Vegetables!

Most people don't like them even though they're good for us! Granted, planking can be boring, but boring doesn't mean unchallenging. The many positive benefits of the plank more than make up for its boringness. The plank doesn't require any equipment; it can be performed anywhere; it is one of the safest exercises for anyone to do at any age; it targets over 29 muscles at the same time, improves sports performance, and only takes 1 to 3 minutes a day to perform.



Why Are Plank Exercises So Great?

As mentioned earlier, holding the plank position helps to condition your core, works your glutes, hamstrings, and supports proper posture as well as improves balance. Planks have been proven to be effective and safe. According to Dr. Glenn Wright, an associate professor of Exercise Science at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse, planking targets the abdominals in the manner in which they are intended to function – isometrically. He also states that “...the main function of the abs is to stop movement... and also initiate movement”.



How to perform a Plank

To perform the plank exercise:

1. Lie face down on the floor, resting on your forearms.
2. Rise on your toes, keeping your elbows on the ground, directly below your shoulders.
3. Hold a flat back, maintaining your body in a straight line from head to heels.
4. Contract your abdominis to ensure your body doesn't sag.
5. Hold this position for 20-30 seconds, rest and repeat 3-5 times.
Build up slowly until you can hold the position for 1 minute or more.
Three sets of 1 minute long holds per day will do you more good than eating an apple a day. Also, it takes less time to perform the exercise.

Once you have become accustomed to the plank, have good form, and can hold it for a more extended period, you can test yourself with tougher variations that are listed on the next page.



- Side plank: lay on your side and use your elbow to prop your body up, allowing only your feet and forearm to rest on the ground. Be sure to hold your body in a straight line



- **Single arm plank:** from the usual plank position, slowly reach one arm out in front of you, while keeping your body steady, and then return it to the floor. Re-do the exercise with the other arm and keep on alternating. Resist the urge to allow your hips to move to the side opposite the extended arm.

- **Single leg plank:** from the standard plank position, keeping your body stable and straight, gradually lift your foot, one at a time, off the ground.



- **Plank on Stability Ball:** Get into plank position by supporting your body weight with your chest and forearms on the ball, keeping your toes on the floor. Lift your chest off of the ball so your upper body weight is supported by your forearms. Keep your abdominals contracted, your back straight, and eyes ahead of you. Hold for time.



Overall, the plank is one of the most effective and safest exercises you can do in the shortest amount of time. It takes less than 3 minutes a day, but is easily abandoned due to its lack of visual feedback and interactivity.

So, now, to the big question....

Are you ready to make the plank exercise a daily habit?

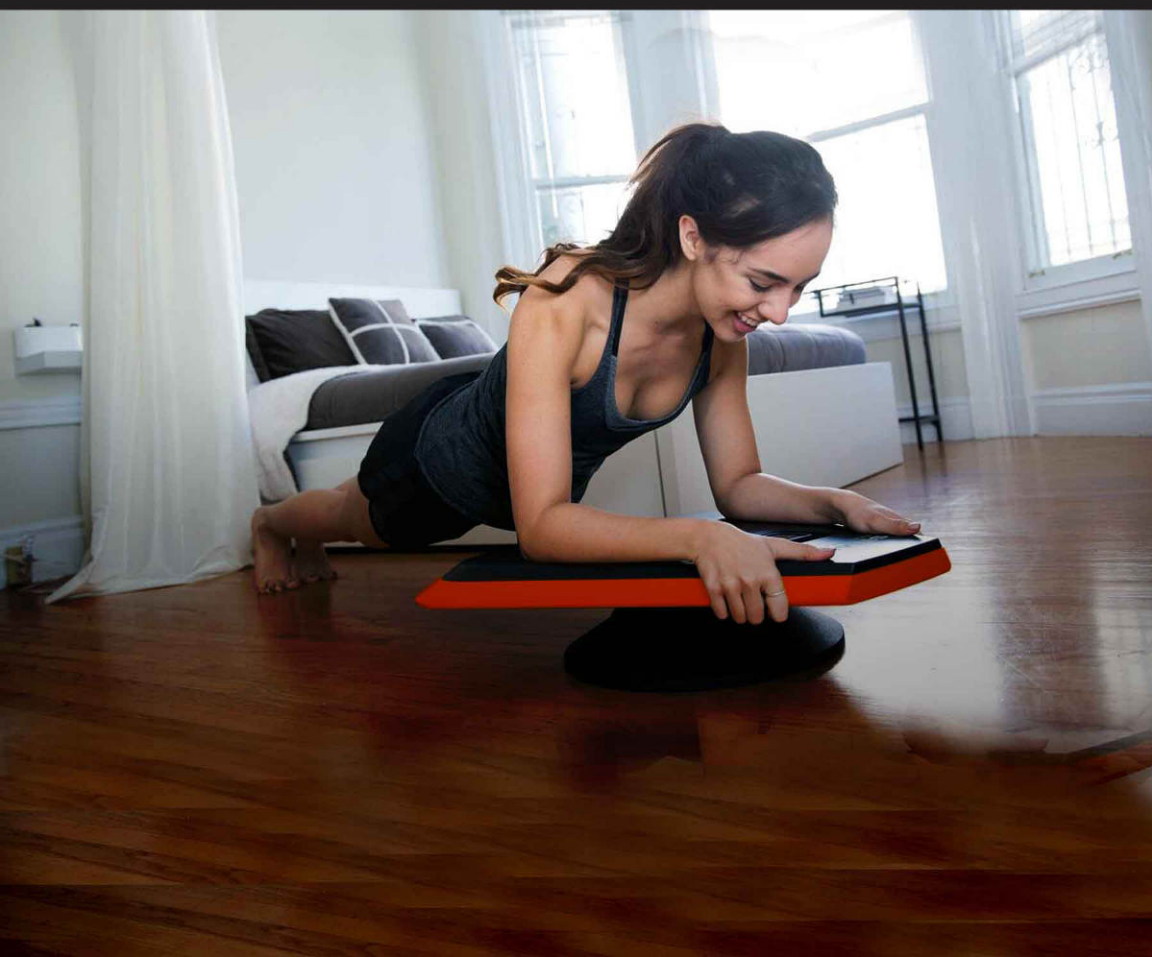


Start By Making Planks Fun

Stealth is an innovative planking platform that makes the plank even more challenging, interactive, and enjoyable. After years of research and development, Stealth was created to make the plank not only more challenging, but also to break the monotony of planking.



The Stealth "shocks" the whole body where it engages multiple physiological areas at once: trunk control and abdominal strength, vestibular, proprioceptive, and visual senses responsible for balance. It produces a strong Isometric contraction that engages all the muscle groups of the body, down to a person's fingertips and toes. When you combine all these stimuli, the body fatigues quickly, building a stronger core. It will fatigue the average person in about 1 to 3 minutes, improving one's fitness level quickly.



How to Improve Your Plank Holding Time

As with every exercise, there are steps that you need to take to ease yourself into planking. Doing the training requires you to commit between 5 to 10 minutes of your time every day. Here's how you can ease yourself into a fit and healthy lifestyle:

Challenge yourself to get to a 3 minute plank and beyond

- Begin slowly and choose a more comfortable variation if need be. Don't be hard on yourself in the beginning if you are new to planks. Instead, if you find planking to be difficult, practice a more natural variety of the exercise such as a bent-knee plank. Alternatively, you can perform an incline push-up using a chair. It will enable you to work the muscles you will need to perform a proper straight-arm plank. As you work your way up to holding a plank for two minutes or more, you can include more demanding variations. The purpose is to allow your body some time to adapt to the exercise.

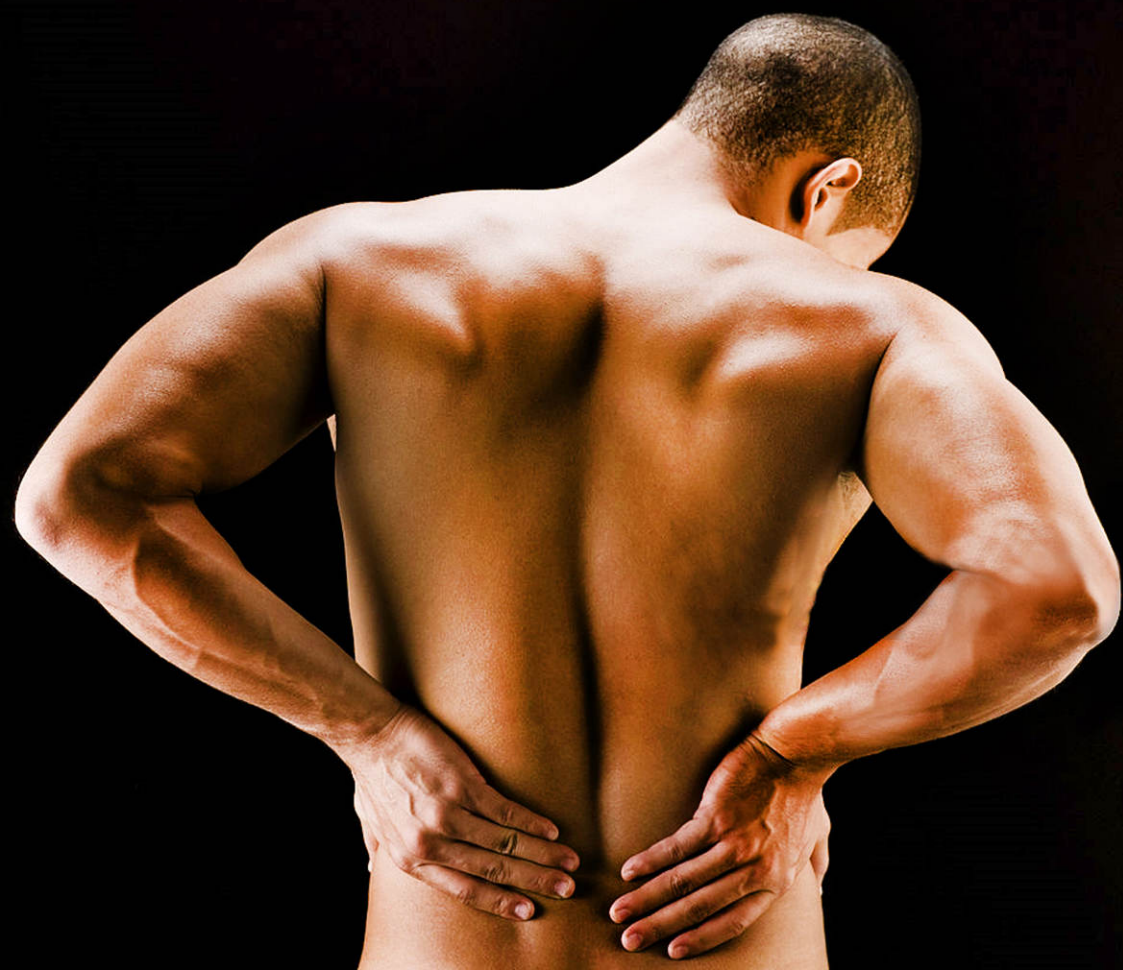


- Regular practice goes a long way. For better results, practice planking every day. Space your planking appropriately and perform it between 3-4 times per day. You can try to increase your endurance by holding a position ten seconds longer each time you do it.
- Incorporate other bodyweight exercises. Variety is the spice of life. You can combine planking with other bodyweight exercises such as push-ups and squats to further improve your core strength. These can be done to complement the plank exercises.



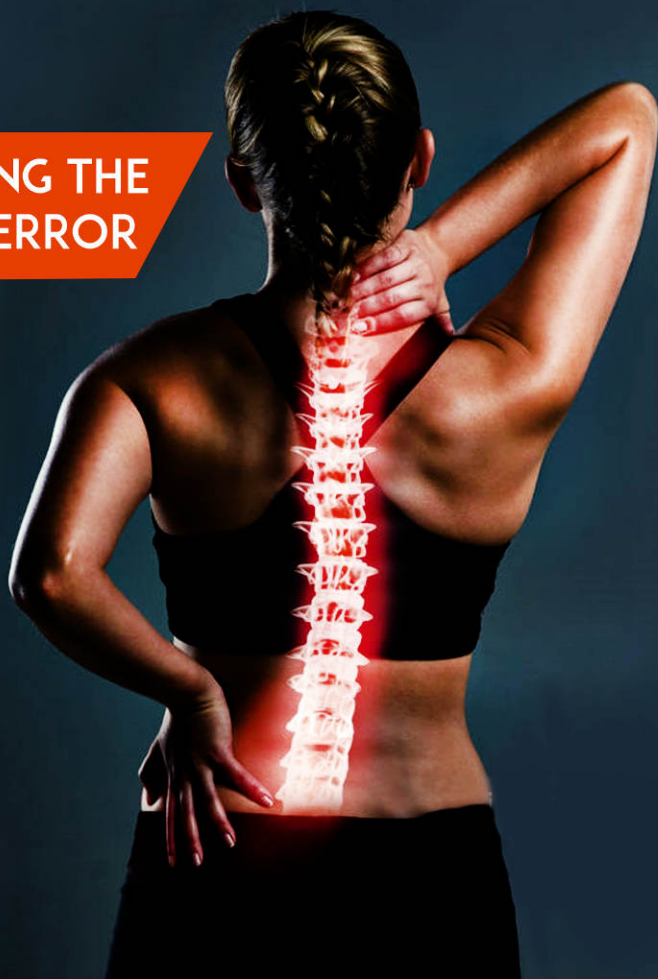
Common Plank Mistakes and How You Can Fix Them

The plank pushes your core strength to its limit. However, certain mistakes can stop you from maximizing the benefits of the isometric exercise. This aspect of the book will help you understand how to do a proper plank and make the exercise more tasking in order to maximize the benefits. Here are some of the mistakes commonly made during planking and how you can correct them:



- Arching the back is an error often made by beginners. It should be noted that if the abdominals are not worked, the arms become exhausted from holding the majority of the weight. When this happens, there's a tendency for people to arch their back, putting extreme pressure on the spine.
- **How to correct this:** Ensure that your shoulders are broad and plant your palms widely on the floor. When you broaden your shoulders, you take considerable weight off of your upper body. Instead, you exert your core muscles which need to be worked.

ARCHING THE BACK ERROR





- **Lowering the hips is another common mistake.** As your abdominal and arm muscles start to tire out, there's the likelihood that your hips will start to go down. When this happens, your core muscles aren't being challenged, which in turn strains your lower back. You don't want to find yourself in this position.

How to correct this: To keep your core muscles challenged, it's essential that you keep your hips raised. To do this, tuck in your bottom, then squeeze your glutes. Also, you can keep your feet angled out and away from each other so that you will have a more stable base. While you contract and work your midsection, take deep breaths. This will enable you to hold the position and reap the benefits from planking.



- Looking up or straight ahead is another error. Doing this can put a strain on the neck, causing the rest of your position to collapse.

How to correct this: You should look down on the floor when doing a plank. This way, your head and neck will be in alignment with the rest of your body.

- Having your butt too high in the air is a mistake made commonly by those who are new to planking. It's an easier and more comfortable position to be in, but by no means is it effective on your core.

How to correct this: Drop your hips and focus on keeping your entire body in a straight line. If you stop feeling the burn in your core, odds are your hips are raised too high.



PROPER PLANK FORM



Combining Planks with the Right Nutrition

If you are doing plank exercises, chances are you want to either maintain your current weight, or lose weight. Regardless of which you intend to do, it is highly unlikely that you can achieve either goal without losing fat. However, planks alone won't get rid of the stubborn fat that you want to lose. It's going to be impossible to lose weight or get a six pack without combining the right exercises with a proper diet. This is why it is essential that the two go hand in hand. You will benefit more from plank exercises if you:



- **Cut back on sugars/starches:** Sugars and starches can hinder your fitness goals. Increased sugars and starches (aka carbohydrates) stimulates insulin in the body, an anabolic hormone produced by the pancreas which stores glucose for future use, hindering weight loss. Increased insulin levels causes weight gain, while lower insulin levels promotes metabolism of fat reserves making you leaner.

Eat lean protein, vegetables, and healthy fat. It is always recommended to eat a balanced diet. You should aim to include low-carb vegetables, a source of protein, and healthy fat in each plate. Some sources of protein include salmon, eggs, lean beef, chicken, trout, and even beans. You can also add vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, cabbage, kale, lettuce, and cucumbers to your meals. Healthy fat sources you can add include coconut oil, olive oil, butter, tallow, avocado oil, etc.

Getting Core Focused

To see physical changes in your body, it's important to pay close attention to what you're putting inside your core. "Healthy" food is a broad category, so it's helpful to understand what foods specifically help your core muscles build up. As mentioned before, cutting back on sugars and starches is key in dropping stored fat. Muscle growth is also easier when you fuel your body with protein, healthy fats, and fruits and vegetables. Your core shape is a great reflection of your overall health. If you look down, and can't see your toes, you should start paying more attention to how you fuel your body and how you burn that fuel. However, being skinny doesn't necessarily mean your core is healthy. Core health is a combination of low belly fat and muscular strength.

Cutting calories is essential for losing fat, but the foods you do eat throughout the day should benefit your body in some way. A day of meals could look like this: an egg white and spinach omelette for breakfast; a salad with leafy greens or kale, topped with grilled chicken and a serving of oil and vinegar for lunch; a yogurt or apple for a snack; and vegetable soup for dinner. A healthy core begins and is maintained in the kitchen. Providing your body with the proper fuel puts you one step closer to getting a strong and healthy core.

Conclusion

The Plank exercise is a very beneficial exercise, which explains its incredible popularity. Making it a part of your workout routine can boost your fitness levels in ways you never imagined. Doing planks strengthens the bones and joints that link your upper and lower body, making it easier to lift, reach, turn, and bend. A study found that doing planks provides 100 percent activation of six-pack muscles. Planking on a regular basis will tighten your abdominal muscles and tone other areas of your body.

Furthermore, plank exercises enhance metabolism and fat burn. For every pound of muscle you gain through planks, your body torches about 50 calories more each day. This means that if you add ten pounds of muscle, your body has the capability to burn about 500 more calories on a daily basis



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