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An Ab Training Program For Beginners and Advanced

, [Amazon US Version](#))

and wanted my readers to benefit from this regained knowledge as much as my training clients. So I've put together a brief, but complete program that outlines where you should start and how to progress your ab training.

In addition to the information presented in McGill's superb book the training program and progressions are also based on my own experience of working with clients for over 15 years.

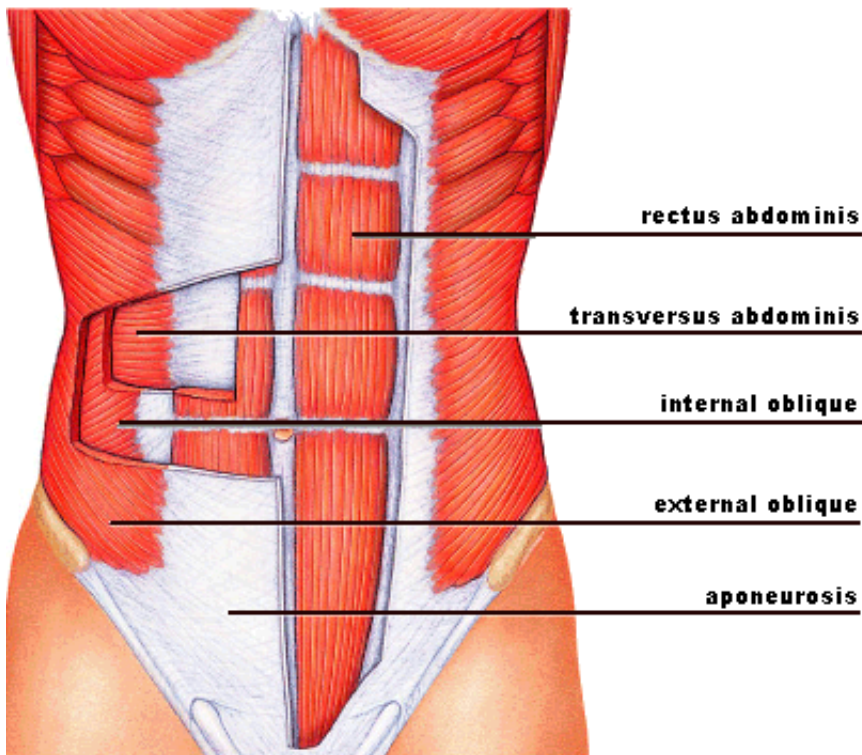
I've been re-reading through 'Low Back Disorders' by Stuart McGill ([Amazon UK version](#))

Core & Abdominal Anatomy

Your midsection is pretty complicated, and I'm not going to present an exhaustive set of data here, if you want to go into massive detail you should either check out the McGill book or the links I have copied at the end of this section

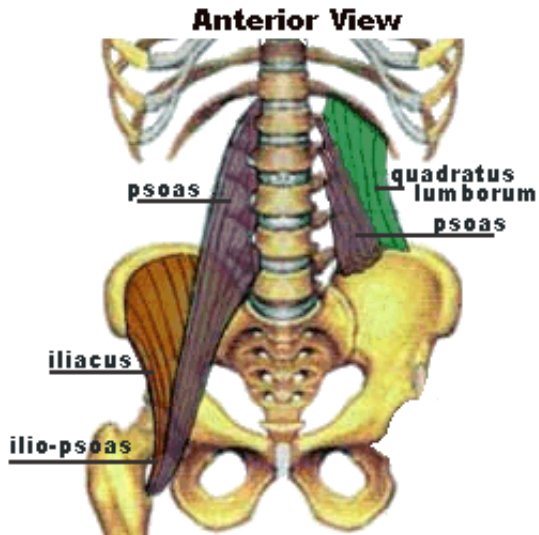
Abdominal Anatomy Picture:

Anterior View of the Abdominal Muscles



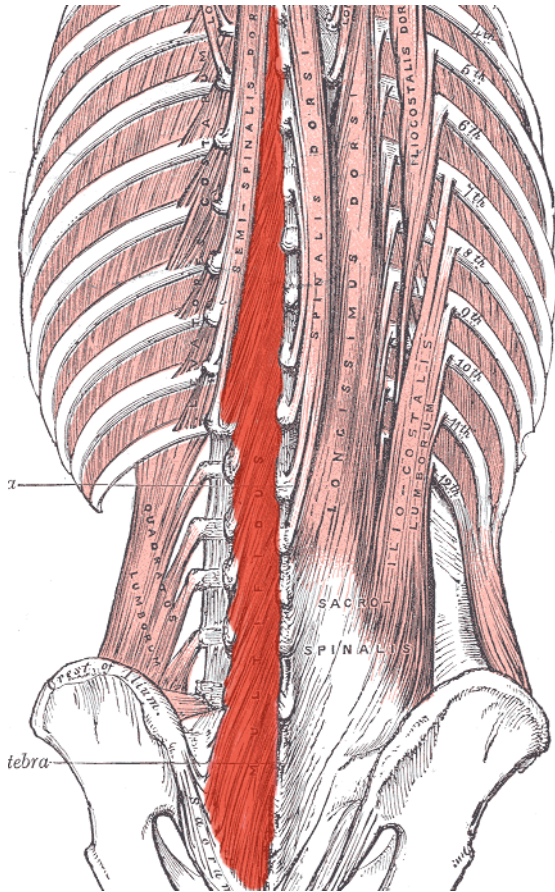
You can see from this image that the front of your core muscles are grouped together in a way that allows them to work together to produce movement, but the real job of your core muscles is to provide stability. This has massive implications for training, as your goal with training is to increase their ability to produce stabilising strength, not movement strength. When we get to the exercises, you'll see what to do to increase stability strength, not movement strength, for now, just notice that nearly all forms of situps and curls produce movement, and don't test your stability...

It's worth pointing out that the abdominal wall muscles are not the only muscles involved in stabilising your core. We also have to be aware of your deep spinal muscles, and some of the hip muscles.



The Psoas Major muscle provides an enormous amount of assistance when both moving (which you do want it to get better at, unlike your anterior ab muscles), and when aiding in stability. This is one the most chronically shortened muscles in the body, and this chronic shortening also leads to weakness. We want your hip flexor muscles (which also include Iliacus, Psoas Minor and the Rectus Femoris head of Quadriceps, and also, but much less, Sartorius).

The final part of the muscles in the stabilisation picture are the deep spinal muscles...



As you can see from this image (from Greys Anatomy via Wikipedia) there are many layers of muscle that support the spine, and will work in conjunction with, and opposition to, the anterior (front) abdominal muscles when supporting the spine and stabilising the core. The goal with these muscles, as with the abdominals, is to produce stabilisation, not produce movement. The implication in training is that you want to use exercises that force your midsection to be stable, not exercises that produce movement.

I'll come to exercise selection below, and will aid this selection and understanding with videos that show you exactly what to do, and what not to do.

Really want to get into the anatomy of all these muscles?

Check out some of these links:

- [Wikipedia Page on Spinal Anatomy](#)
- [Google Books Online Version of Low Back Disorders](#) (not all pages are viewable)
- [Youtube video on a Spinal Dissection](#) (not for the faint-hearted!)
- **Youtube Video on [Basic Abdominal Anatomy and Function](#)**
- **Youtube Video on [Abdominal Dissection](#) (not for those who don't like cutting things up!)**

Abdominal & Core Physiology or Function

This video from Dr Stuart McGill give some good information about some of the prime myths and mistakes people make when training their core, lower back and abs. Of particular interest are two points; 1/ That lower back muscle strength is much less important than endurance, and that repeated flexion of the lumbar spine seems to lead to injury with frightening frequency.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=033ogPH6NNE>

Abdominal Function in more detail

In addition to the core message Dr McGill gives us, namely that you should be training your core or abs for strength endurance and stability, you should also be aware of how the structure of the whole of the core muscles work together to connect your upper and lower body, not produce movement from the core.

Situps Are Dead

What you can do to check this out for yourself is this; look at the anatomy of the core, lower back and abdominals, and also look at any athlete performing a powerful action.

Let's start with the lessons from anatomy.

Take a look at some of the pictures above showing spinal, core and abdominal anatomy and one thing you might notice is how much overlapping and crossing the muscles do. The number of seemingly conflicting angles, attachment points and lengths points to a structure that's designed for stabilisation, not movement. This is in stark contrast to the leg muscles, or the arm muscles, which are mostly aligned and can be seen to operate in unison in producing harmonious, fluid, powerful movement. One look at the abdominal unit tells this story most clearly; the multiple layers and different angles allow the muscles to tense without producing movement, just what you need when you're transferring force from one bodypart to another. This is the stabilising job of the core in action.

Next take a look at spinal muscular anatomy and you'll see that there are lots of small, layered muscles that will work together to potentially produce movement, when looked at singly, but when taken as a 360 degree view around the spine will show that they are there to counteract movement and produce stability. It's quite beautiful really.

Next, have a look at this video of a pair of Javelin throwers:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBNUva0c4J4>

What do you notice about their ab movements?

Did you see any 'crunching'?

None At All!

This tells you once again that the role of the core, midsection and abdominals is to support movement and transmit force. This leads us to:

Common Ab and Core Training Mistakes

Click one of the links below to see the mistakes most people make when training abs (and after these mistakes I'll show you what exercises you should be doing to get a six pack or flat stomach and how to combine your training and diet to create a great looking body)

[WP Viral Attack="2"]

You can also find this article published on [An Ab Training Program For Beginners and Advanced](#)