

## THE KEY TO A FLATTER TUMMY

It's summer and we all want a nice flat stomach. You've tried doing 100 curl ups every morning but you just can't get rid of that pot belly. This is one exercise where technique is so important and also a case of where less is more in order to obtain the results you aspire to. Strengthening your abdominals will also improve posture and help support the lower back.

Many make the mistake of concentrating on the upper abdominals (rectus abdominis) otherwise known as the six pack, completely neglecting the lower abdominals. This is particularly important for women who have recently given birth to consider as during pregnancy the rectus abdominis muscles come apart and can take up to six weeks to knit back together. Therefore if these muscles are strengthened whilst apart they will remain that way permanently. It is advisable to wait 6 to 8 weeks after giving birth before attempting curl ups and up to 5 months if a caesarean was performed.

Common mistakes made when attempting curl ups are lifting too high, pulling on the head, lifting from the chest and tilting the pelvis. These all contribute to the dreaded pot belly and possible straining of the neck. Picture one shows the incorrect execution of a curl up.



To perform a curl up correctly keep the lower back in its natural curve, don't push it into the floor. The hands are clasped at the back of the head in order to support and cradle it. The elbows should be visible from the corner of the eyes. As you breathe in gently tilt the head forwards so that you lengthen the neck, keeping a small gap between the chin and the chest. Now as you breathe out curl up from your mid back allowing the ribs to draw down towards the waist to bring you up to the centre. Try not to use your legs. As you curl up think about pulling your navel down towards the spine almost like a sponge being gently squeezed. Keep your eyes on the front of the body making sure it hasn't shortened. Breathe in to prepare and then curl back down on the out breathe still pulling the navel in towards the spine. Picture two shows the correct way to perform a curl up.



Do two sets of 12 repetitions, resting for a few seconds between each set every day. If done slowly and with control you should feel a difference within a week. Within two weeks you should start to see the difference.