

Brampton: 220 Wexford Road Unit 2 Brampton, ON L6Z-4N7  
Ph: (905) 840-WELL Fax: (905) 840 -LIFE  
www.drjustineblainey.com  
www.blaineywellness.com

# 30-Day Plank Challenge

May 20, 2016 | 9,253 views

By Dr. Mercola

**The Whys and Whats of Your Core:** Strengthening your core is about becoming functionally fit. Your abdominal and back muscles are used for more than showing off at the beach or at the gym. Your abs and back are just a part of your core muscles that protect your abdominal organs and provide your body with foundational strength. Core strength is integral to daily skills and athletic performance. Runners, football players, handball players and other athletes find core strength improves performance and reduces risk of injury. But you don't have to be an athlete to appreciate and enjoy the benefits of a strong midsection. Your core muscles stabilize your body, help you maintain your posture and act as a shock absorber to minimize injury. This muscle group has three-dimensional depth and function. You use these muscles to bend, stand and turn. The main category of muscles in your core include:

Rectus abdominis: your six-pack muscles, running from your chest to your pelvis, responsible for flexion, or bending you forward.

Erector spinae: used for extending your trunk, helping you to stand up after bending over or to bend backward.

Transverse abdominis: the muscle you use when you pull your belly button toward your spine. It is located under the rectus abdominis

Multifidi: hold your spine stable during movement and are located on either side of the vertebrae in your spine.

Internal and external obliques: these muscles are located on either side of the rectus abdominis and help you to turn from side to side.

Gluteus maximus, medius and minimus: muscles located in your buttocks and pelvis used to stabilize your hips and spine.

## 6 Benefits to the Plank Position

The plank position offers an exceptional range of muscle development due to the position of your body during the exercise. The plank, and variations of the position, works a variety of your core muscles and your shoulder girdle simultaneously. This also integrates your neurological system. The plank is also more efficient than doing crunches. During crunches you are working just the abdominal muscles responsible for flexion and not the oblique muscles or those controlling your back. There are six specific benefits to using the plank position and the variations described below.

1. Tight Abs: Planks lay the groundwork for tight abdominal muscles so you look better in your clothes and your bathing suit. To get those ripped six-pack abs you also need to shed the layer of fat over the muscle. However, you don't need to shed the fat to enjoy the rest of these benefits.

2. Strong Core: Strong muscles more easily defend your abdominal organs and help you to breathe easier. Your diaphragm is located just under your rib cage. You pull the diaphragm down with your abdominal

muscles, which creates negative pressure in your lungs and draws air in.

3. **Back Support:** Strengthening your back muscles reduces the likelihood of a back strain or back injury. Between 60 percent to 80 percent of people living in the U.S. will suffer from low back pain at some point in their life. It is the second most common reason people go to the doctor. Developing a strong core may protect your back from injury and pain.

4. **Balance and Posture:** Good balance and posture are important to your overall health and wellness. Balance helps you control and maintain your body position when you're sitting, standing and moving. Good posture reduces upper back pain and overstretched muscles from rounded shoulders and slumping forward.

5. **Improved Performance:** A strong core will improve your athletic performance and your ability to do your daily tasks. When you do planks regularly you'll likely find it's easier to move through your day without stress or pain.

6. **Improved Mental Strength and Mood:** Maintaining a plank position for two to three minutes requires both physical and mental strength. However, you don't start by holding the plank for three minutes! As you work your way through the 30-day plank challenge, you'll overcome mental and physical challenges to maintain the position, but at a rate you can handle. With each small hurdle you overcome, you may develop greater mental strength and can use the knowledge of your victories to overcome other challenges in your day. Exercise and strength training also elevate your mood and help you to experience more joy each day.

Planks are done on the floor, on your forearms, with your elbows shoulder-width apart. You are on your toes, with your back straight, your abdominal and buttock muscles tight. You will look like you're doing a push-up, but on your forearms instead of your hands.

Variation	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Basic plank	Stand approximately 3 feet from a wall. Press your hands into the wall, elbows straight, weight on your toes and hold for 30 seconds. You may also do this on the floor with your hands flat to the floor and knees bent.	Done on the floor with either your hands flat to the floor or bearing weight on your forearms in the standard plank position. Hold this position for two minutes.	Done on the floor, bearing weight on your hands or over your forearms. Place your feet on a chair or a bench so your body is in a decline position.
Up/Down Plank	Start on the floor on your knees in straight-arm position. Next move to your forearms, hold for two to three seconds and move back to a straight arm position. Up and down is one repetition.	Done on the floor in the basic plank position. Move from straight arms to your forearms bearing your weight. Hold for two to three seconds and then go back up to a straight arm position. Up and down once is one repetition.	With your hands on the floor in a straight arm position, put your feet on a bench or chair so your body is in a decline position. Move to your forearms, hold for two to three seconds and then back to a straight arm position. This is one repetition.
Planks With Leg Raises	Start on the floor with your knees bent and in the straight-arm position. Pull one leg up toward the ceiling as if a string is pulling your leg from behind the knee. Hold for one or two seconds and bring it back down. Repeat with the other leg. This is one repetition.	The same movement as the beginner exercise except you are starting from the standard plank position on your forearms.	The same movement as the intermediate exercise except you hold your leg up for 30 to 60 seconds and repeat with your other leg.

Plank Knee Crunch	Place your hands flat on a chair or bench, placing your body in the plank position, bearing your weight on your toes. Bring your right knee to your right elbow and return to the start position. Repeat with your left leg. This is one repetition.	Start on the floor in the straight-arm position, on your toes. Bring your right knee to your right elbow and return to the starting position. Repeat with your left leg. This is one repetition.	Start on the floor straight-arm position. Bring your right knee to your right elbow and return, quickly repeat with your left leg
-------------------	--	--	---

### Take Your 30-Day Plank Challenge

Planks are deceptively difficult but produce consistent and valuable results for your health. If you don't exercise regularly and try to start with intermediate planks, you may find them too difficult and stop the process. Instead, try this 30-day plank challenge to reach your goal of holding a plank for three minutes.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Friday	Sat
15 secs Incline	15 secs Incline	20 secs Incline	20 secs Incline	25 secs Incline	25 secs Incline	30 secs Incline
30 secs Incline	15 secs Standard	15 secs Standard	20 secs Standard	20 secs Standard	25 secs Standard	25 secs Standard
30 secs Standard	30 secs Standard	40 secs Standard	40 secs Standard	50 secs Standard	50 secs Standard	1 minute Standard
1 minute Standard	90 secs Standard	90 secs Standard	90 secs Standard	2 min. Standard	2 min Standard	2 min. Standard
2.5 min. Standard	3 min. Standard					