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THE A-LIST
STOMACH
WORKOUT

MIRACLE
BABY
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BACK to FLAT

Whether you're losing your post-baby tummy or simply want a more toned midriff, **KATY JOUNG** explores the expert advice for getting the shape you want without the endless crunches

It's ironic that the workout we spend most time on is the one that 80 per cent of us are getting wrong. It's the classic mistake women make. They spend hours working the same stomach muscle over and over again, starting with sit-ups, then crunches with legs up and crunches with the legs down, devoting too much time to one muscle and ignoring the rest, explains Hollywood's hottest trainer, Joe Foweraker (www.joefoweraker.co.uk). The abdominals, like any muscle, get bigger the more you train them, so if you overtrain them, they start to grow or even protrude. 'Think of a bodybuilder: he builds up his abs, and they just look bulky, even under a T-shirt,' he says.

So although the classic crunch can work, Foweraker's trick for his Hollywood clients is to think of your stomach as a 'box', training the sides, the lid and the bottom, too; stick to just doing crunches and you'll get a great lid sitting on top of nothing! For the beautiful hourglass curve, you have to work the sides, and for a flatter stomach without that 'pouch', you have to work the lower stomach muscles below the belly button, too.

Getting your body fat down is essential, and that will happen with cardio exercise (Anything that gets your heart rate up, especially skipping, is great,' says Foweraker) and watching what you eat ('The LA fat-burning trick is to eat grapefruit at every meal. But in the real world, if you are going to treat yourself, do it at breakfast or lunch, never dinner, as that's when you store extra calories as fat,' he says). Remember, it doesn't matter how great your abs look if they're hidden under that 'pouch' of fat.

Nutrition

DO 'START TAKING A PROBIOTIC (either natural yoghurt or a high-quality supplement) to prevent bloating,' advises Jan Marber of the Food Doctor. Try *Uchi's Choice Super 5 Hi-Potency Probiotic* £24.99 (www.thefooddoctor.co.uk). Also, **STAY HYDRATED**: 'If you're not hydrated, you won't burn fat efficiently,' says Foweraker.

DON'T 'EAT OR DRINK ANY FERMENTED FOODS, found in alcohol, sauerkraut and balsamic vinegar, as they cause bloating,' says Marber. And **DON'T DREI**: once you come off it, the body stores extra calories around the abdomen, where the fat cells are, which immediately creates an uncomfortable feeling of a bigger, bloated stomach.'

Toning The five-minute TOTAL TONING PROGRAMME BY JAMES DUGAN

Personal trainer James Dugan of Bodyton.com is the man who trained Elle Macpherson after her two pregnancies. He uses a total stomach-toning programme that is unique for not including crunches, which 'don't burn fat and only work one muscle', he says. 'My trick is what I call the complex exercise, which blasts the entire stomach.'

1 THE TIGHTENING PLANK

Lying on your front, lift your weight off the floor so that it's balanced between your toes and forearms, looking down at the floor - keeping a flat back and shoulders away from the ears - hold this position, squeezing the core muscles. Aim for one minute, but if this is too tough, start off where you can and build up slowly.

2 THE TONING LUNGE

From a standing position, lunge one leg in front of the other, with your knee hovering exactly over the ankle - then twist your upper body to a 90-degree angle on the same side as the bent leg, until you feel your stomach engage. Work up to 12 repetitions on each leg. And once you've mastered 12, repeat the whole set twice.

3 THE SCULPTING SWING

Kneeling shoulder-width apart, back straight, hold a weight (2kg-3kg) in both hands. With your arms out straight, take the weight down to your left knee and then swing it around slowly to your right shoulder in a 'golf swing' motion, following through with your hips so that you face the right. Do 15 of these and repeat on the other side. Work up to two sets. □

Insider tips

The Hollywood tip

The French tradition of tightly wrapping a post-pregnancy stomach in bandages for weeks after giving birth has long been thought to help new mothers regain their shape. An easy alternative is to wear two pairs of high-waisted Spanx every day, a practice endorsed by Gwyneth Paltrow and Jessica Alba. *Spanx High Rise Power High Waisted Briefs*, £35 at John Lewis.

The toning tip

'Get into the habit of using your transverse muscle, the muscle that acts like a tightening corset around the body, which you can feel when you cough,' says Julie Taylor, author of *Low Year Mumsey Tummy* (£11.99, Da Capo). 'Find it by putting your hands on your stomach and bring your belly button back towards your spine. Hold it there for a count of 30 - counting out loud as that forces you to breathe. Now close your eyes and squeeze even deeper, imagining your belly button is going from your spine to your outer spine, release, and repeat 10 times, counting out loud. End with a deep breath. Repeat the whole exercise 10 times throughout the day. Boost the effects by using your transverse muscle when you're sitting down at your desk or watching a film, the more you do it, the more it will start to tone itself.'

The pro tip

'You must build up super-slowly when toning a post-baby stomach,' says Jess Schwarcz, founder of Heartcore Pilates. 'It's easy to put too much pressure on your abs too quickly, which can actually separate your muscles down the middle, long-term. And as the lower back then compensates for a weak stomach, you'll also risk lower back pain and jarring your mid-back.'