



15 minutes
and you're
done:

crunch- free abs

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**THE ROUTINE: crunch-free abs**

The flat-out truth? Experts say that crunches aren't the ticket to a slim midsection. That's especially true if your protruding belly is the result of diastasis recti, a condition in which the rectus abdominus muscles separate due to pregnancy, weight gain, or exercising with poor form, says Julie Taylor, a registered nurse and a fitness expert in New York City (julytaylorfitness.com). To tighten your tummy, you need to work your entire core—meaning all of the muscles in your abdomen. This series of exercises, which Taylor created, can do the trick. For best results, complete the moves at least three times a week.

**1 Core contraction**

Sit on a bench or chair and place both hands on your abdomen. Inhale and expand your belly, feeling your hands move out. Exhale and contract your abdominals—imagine pulling them in all the way to your spine. Sustain the contraction for 30 counts (to make sure you don't hold your breath, count out loud). Then do 10 small squeezes.

**2 Seated squeeze**

Rest one hand on your upper stomach and the other below your navel. Inhale to expand your belly. Exhale and draw your abs halfway toward your spine. (This is the starting position.) Contract your abs even more deeply toward your spine for two counts, then return to the starting position for two counts. Work up to 100 repetitions.

**3 Head lift**

(A) Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Inhale to expand your belly, then exhale to contract your abs toward your spine. (Imagine a scarf tied around your core, pulling your abs muscles together.) (B) Tuck your chin and raise your head off the floor, counting aloud for two. Return to the starting position for two counts. Repeat 10 times.

**4 Upright push-up**

(A) Stand at arm's length from a wall, with palms flat against the wall. Inhale to expand your belly, then exhale and draw it toward your spine. (B) Press against the wall in a push-up, keeping your elbows close to your sides. As you push back to the starting position, contract your abs even more deeply toward your spine. Repeat 20 times.

**5 Squat against the wall**

(A) Stand with a stability ball behind your lower back. Step forward with both feet, keeping them hip-distance apart. Inhale to expand your belly, then exhale and contract your abs toward your spine. (B) Bend your knees to lower into a squat. Straighten your legs to standing and contract your abs even more deeply toward your spine. Repeat 20 times.

**6 Squat with squeeze**

(A) Stand with your back against the wall, feet in front of you. Place a playground ball or pillow between your knees. Inhale to expand your belly, then exhale and contract your abs. (B) Bend your knees and lower into a squat. Squeeze the ball with your thighs, drawing your abs even more deeply toward your spine. Do 20 squeezes, return to start.