

Work your Abs without Crunches!

Twisting Wood Chop With Medicine Ball

Do three sets of 15 reps on each side

- Start with the feet a little wider than hip distance apart. Twist to the left raising the ball over to your left shoulder.
- On an exhale pull your abs toward your spine and “chop” the ball down diagonally across your body toward the outside of your right knee. Imagine you’re chopping some wood at this angle and the ball is your axe — the move is a bit percussive.
- Focus the on the rotation initiating in your torso.
- Control the ball back up to the starting position. This completes one rep.
- Remember you are moving with force but also control. Don’t give into the momentum of swinging the ball around.



Overhead Circles With Medicine Ball

Do three sets

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart with a slight bend in your knees. Keep your spine in neutral as you lift a five- to eight-pound medicine ball over your head.
- Begin to circle the ball to the right, in the largest circles you can make, while maintaining a still and stable torso.
- Circle eight times to the right; then repeat, circling eight times to the left.



Ball Pass

Complete three sets of 12 to 15 reps.

- Lie on your back holding an exercise ball above your chest, extending your feet up toward the ceiling.
- On an exhale, move your arms and legs away from each other, lowering both toward the ground. Inhale to bring them back toward each other, and transfer the ball from your hands to your legs.
- Then lower your arms and legs toward the floor away from each other.



Flutter Kicks With Resistance Band

- Sit on a mat or carpeted floor. Loop one handle of the resistance band on either foot. Hold on to the middle of the tube with both hands and lie on your back.
- Draw your navel toward your spine and press your low spine into the floor to protect your lower back, then lift both legs up so they are almost pointing straight up toward the ceiling.
- Holding the band securely, scissor your legs up and down one at a time, starting with the left leg. Move slowly and point your toes. Each time your right foot lowers down counts as one set. Complete 10 to 15 sets.
- To make this move more difficult, lower your legs so they are about six to 10 inches above the floor. Make sure to keep your abs scooped when you work with your legs close to the ground. Scissor your legs for another 10 to 15 sets.



Leaning Camel

Repeat for a total of 15 times. Complete a total of three sets.

- Stand on your knees with your toes tucked. If this hurts your knees, fold up a mat or towel and kneel on that for a little cushioning. Your thighs should be parallel.
- Hold a dumbbell comfortably with both hands in front of your chest. I use an eight-pounder.
- Take a breath in and as you exhale, use your quad muscles to lower your torso behind you. Don't arch your back as in Camel pose, but instead keep your torso in one straight line. As you inhale, return your torso back to the starting position.



Side Bend With Dumbbells

Repeat for a total of 12 bends to the right, then switch sides. Do three sets.

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart holding five- to 10-pound dumbbells at your sides.
- Bend sideways to the right, squeezing your waist on the right side. Keep your neck as neutral as possible, looking forward not down.
- Pull the left ribs down to return to standing upright. This focuses the work on the left obliques.



Tabletop to Reverse Pike

Do three sets of 12 to 15 reps, flowing from one to the other, pivoting on your hands and heels. To make this move more challenging, hold each position for longer.

- Start off sitting on your bum, so your hands are planted eight inches behind you. Bend your knees and place your heels about a foot away from your hips. Make sure they are hips-width distance apart.
- Inhale and lift your hips off the ground so your torso is parallel with the floor and your arms are straight. Your hands should be directly underneath your shoulders and your ankles underneath your knees, so make small adjustments if you need to. Lower your head behind you to increase the stretch in your chest and neck.
- Hold for a complete breath, and then keeping your arms straight, exhale to lower your hips and straighten your legs, so your hips are hovering above the floor. Engage your abs and try to keep your spine long as you balance on your heels and hands. After a complete breath, inhale and push yourself back into the first position.



Ball Pike to Plank

Do 10 reps for two to three sets.

Make sure the ball is sized to your body; you should be able to sit on the ball with 90-degree angles at your hips and knees.

- Start in a plank position with your hands directly under your shoulders and your shins on the ball.
- Do not allow your lower back to arch. Keep your feet, pelvis, and shoulders in one long line.
- On an exhale, pull your abs deeply to your spine and use your abs to fold your body in half, pulling the ball forward toward your hands as your pelvis moves up in the air.
- Your toes will move onto top of ball and your back will become perpendicular to the floor like a handstand. Allow your head to fall between your arms, keeping your neck long and in line with your spine.
- Lower yourself back into a plank position and do not allow your pelvis to sag below your shoulders.



Side Elbow Plank With a Twist

- Come into a side plank on your right side, with your feet stacked one on top of the other and your weight on your right elbow with your fingers reaching away from your body.

- Place your left arm behind your head, and inhale to prepare.

- Exhale and pull your navel to your spine to engage your deep abs and rotate your left ribcage toward the floor. Stay there for a second and deepen your abdominal connection pulling your navel in toward your spine even more.

- Return to starting position and repeat seven more times for a total of eight reps, then switch sides. Repeat series again on both sides



Medicine Ball Alphabet

To start: Grab a medicine ball that's between five and 15 pounds. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, making sure your knees are not locked. Then try one of these two variations.

- For stability: Start with the ball at chest level, and slowly write the cursive alphabet in front of you. While your arms move around in all sorts of angles, you need to use your abs to keep your torso still. Think of keeping the area between your ribs and pelvis solid. For a more advanced version, try this move while standing on a BOSU.

- For mobility: Start with the ball at chest level, but increase the range of motion of your arms making your alphabet larger, using your torso and rib cage to write the letters as well. Keep your abs engaged the entire time. For more of a challenge, try this version in a squat or a lunge.



Warrior 3

Balancing on one leg challenges your core muscles. Here's how to do the Warrior 3 yoga pose:

- Stand with your feet together. Inhale as you extend your arms out wide in T position or straight overhead for a more advanced variation.

- Exhale as you bend forward at your hips, lifting your right leg straight behind you coming into Warrior 3. Draw your navel toward your spine and hold for five breaths.

- Come to stand, lower your right leg, and repeat with the left leg lifted for another five.

