

# MOVEMENT FOR LIFE<sup>®</sup> NEWSLETTER



## MYTH EXPOSED: UPPER AND LOWER ABDOMINALS

by Ashley Fittz, HFS, CSCS  
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Have you ever heard anyone talk about the upper and lower abdominals? I want to take a moment to clarify this myth or misunderstanding about training the abdominals. Frequently, I hear people in the gym and even yoga and pilates instructors or personal trainers talk about training the upper and lower abdominals, which gives people the idea that they can train the upper and lower parts of the superficial rectus abdominus in isolation. The assertion that the upper and lower abdominals can be worked out in isolation from one another, using distinct exercises, has long been one of the most entrenched myths in the fitness world. I cringe when I hear professionals mistakenly prescribe exercises which exclusively target the upper or lower abdominals.

### HOW THE MYTH CAME ABOUT

Historically, core exercises that produce muscle soreness in the upper part of the rectus abdominus muscle – commonly referred to as the “*abdominals*” – have been associated

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## MOST PEOPLE ARE DEAD BY 35

by Ashley Fittz, HFS, CSCS  
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Recently I celebrated my 35<sup>th</sup> birthday which triggered some self-reflection and thoughts about how we all decline as we age unless we take action. The decline is usually slow and gradual, until one day you notice how you struggle to perform everyday tasks that were once simple. I was reading an article about nutrition, and the author used the following quote:

*“Most people are dead at thirty-five, they just walk around for another thirty to forty more years.”*

The quote was intended to apply to most adults from a nutritional standpoint, but I found the message thought provoking and accurate from a physical standpoint as well. By 35, most of the damage is done to our bodies. Without a comprehensive exercise program, the damage is difficult to reverse.

The truth is that quality of life begins to deteriorate after 35 for many people because of a lack of exercise. Sadly, the deterioration doesn't become readily apparent until you reach your 50s or 60s. At this point, it gets much harder to change. Personal training, physical therapy, and other health professions have all been impacted as an aging population attempts to improve not only the length of their life, but the quality.

Despite the grim reality, don't despair. You can make drastic improvements if you change today. The time to fight back is right now! One of my favorite quotes is “*the best time to plant a tree was three years ago. The next best time is today*”. Don't wait another day



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

PAGE 1

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## RECOGNIZING SPORTS CONCUSSION

by Stacey J. Ritter, MS, ATC

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National media has given a lot of attention to sports concussion, especially in professional and college sports. But how much of that applies to the youth or recreational athlete? Is it really a concern for the “regular folks?” Medical research findings over last 5-10 years suggest that sports concussions definitely need to be taken seriously, as new criteria for diagnosis, and new standards of care are being established and frequently revised. Long term effects of multiple concussions and special consideration for adolescents are just a sample of the important studies being published in the proper prevention, and management of head injury. Here are some more facts you may not be aware of:

- 1 in 10 contact sport athletes will have a concussion this year
- 90% of concussions **DO NOT** result in loss of consciousness
- Concussions happen in **MANY** sports - not just football
- Soccer has the highest concussion rate for female athletes
- A high school athlete with a concussion **TRIPLES** their risk of having another

What can **YOU** do to keep teammates, youth athletes, and even yourself safe? The most important thing is to **KNOW THE SIGNS:**

- Appearing dazed
- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems, dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, or foggy

## MYTH EXPOSED: UPPER AND LOWER ABDOMINALS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

with specific “upper abdominal” conditioning, while exercises that provoke soreness in the “lower abdominals” are categorized as targeted lower abdominals training. However, isolating the training effect to different parts of a specific muscle is not physiologically possible. The entire length of the muscle fiber is always involved, regardless of which end is mobile. It’s all or nothing. There’s no isolation of just one half of the fiber.

The all-or-nothing principle of muscle contraction pertains to the entire length of a muscle fiber, not to all the fibers of a muscle. One fiber may contract while a nearby fiber does not, but the fiber that is contracting is committed along its entire length. A muscle fiber cannot contract along only half its length.

Imagine a stretched rubber band representing the rectus abdominus. As the rubber band shortens to its resting length the entire band is involved in the shortening process. This is similar to the way the muscle contracts along its entire length. For one end of the muscle to move, it must be pulled upon from the anchored end at the origin site. That’s why the lower end of the abdominal muscle cannot contract without affecting the rest of the length of fiber.

So the next time one of your friends says they want to train their upper or lower abs, set ‘em straight!

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

- Concentration or memory problems
- Confused, forgetful
- Behavior/personality change
- Can't remember events right before, or right after being hit
- Changes in sleep patterns

If any of these signs or symptoms are present after a blow to the head, **STOP** activity immediately and consult your health care provider. Proper, conservative management is the best way to ensure many years of healthy physical, and mental, activity.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc) or email Stacy Ritter at [stacey.ritter@spsportstherapy.com](mailto:stacey.ritter@spsportstherapy.com).

## MOST PEOPLE ARE DEAD AT 35

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

to begin an exercise program. It takes time and hard work to reverse years of damage, but you have to take action today!

### DON'T MAKE EXCUSES

Obesity, back pain, and so many other conditions that people suffer from are preventable. Exercising for 30 minutes three times per week is a great start for most people, and will have profound effects on your health. Start with a warm-up for 5 minutes, perform 10 minutes of strength training, and finish with 15 minutes of cardiovascular exercise.

As you begin an exercise program, keep in mind that cardiovascular exercise is not as much about time as it is about effort. Strive to do more work in less time, not to add more time.

### BOTTOM LINE

Don't walk around in a dying body. We would never treat our cars the way we treat our bodies. Imagine never changing the oil, using the cheapest possible gas, and driving until the tires are bald. Unfortunately, this is the way we treat our bodies. The only problem is that we can't buy a new body after we ruin the old one. Some damage may be irreversible. If the damage is reversible, we need to reverse it with exercise instead of drugs. The quick fix is not always the best fix. What most people don't realize is that exercise is the most powerful drug on the planet. It's just more difficult to take than swallowing a pill. Try taking a good dose of exercise three times per week and you might be able to throw away or reduce some of the medications you may be taking.

## PEOPLE AND PETS

by Michele Rickwald

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Owner, Sandpipurr Siamese

Are you looking to add a new addition to your pet family anytime soon? Do you know what you should be looking for in a breeder when choosing a new puppy or kitten? First and foremost, are they licensed? Breeders are required by law



to be licensed in their local county. Many will not only display their license but will also be listed with the registry for which they represent, i.e. the AKC (*American Kennel Club*) or CFA, (*Cat Fancier's Association*) to name a couple.

When shopping for a breeder you can also contact the registries for a list of breeders in your area. All new additions need vaccinations and should have had their first one before coming home. Ask the breeder for a health certificate noting which worming and vaccinations were done and when. If the breeder doesn't send your pet home with a sample of the current food they are accustomed to, find out what they are feeding and purchase it. Like any baby you will likely cause diarrhea if you change their diet too quickly. Many breeders offer a health guarantee and require you to sign a contract assuring spay or neuter of your new family friend. The health guarantee usually requires you to have your veterinarian do a check up within the first week of ownership in order to prove that the kitten or puppy was sold in good health. **READ** the contract and ask questions prior to signing it. Not having a vet check if noted in the contract will invalidate your health guarantee.

Okay so now you've picked out your new friend and are headed home. Keep your new pet in an area where they can feel secure and out of harm's way like a bathroom, laundry or utility room. Let them have the opportunity to bond with you before you expose them to a host of new people, animals, rooms and potential mischief. Slowly orient them to their new environment and you'll both be happier for it.

**REMEMBER** - Kittens scratch out of nature not bad behavior and puppies chew for the same reason. Both can easily learn to scratch and chew on what you choose for them once they understand their limitations. If you have problems, contact the breeder. They are always happy to offer advice to insure the animal they placed is safe and healthy.

# ARE WE MEANT TO RUN?

by Ashley Fittz, HFS, CSCS  
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Running is perhaps one of the most popular types of physical activity today. One distance running event, the marathon, has steadily increased in popularity over the past several years. As more and more people run, reports of running injuries follow. According to research, 60%–65% of all runners experience some form of injury each year. This begs the question, “Are we meant to run?” According to an article published in a 2007 issue of Sports Medicine, unique, efficient cooling and energy systems and favorable biomechanics helped early humans cover long distances. The researchers also claimed that a highly efficient human could outlast most mammals. “In short, for marathon-length distances, humans can outrun almost all other mammals and can sometimes outrun even horses, especially when it’s hot.”

According to exercise physiologist Jason Karp, PhD, “The evolution of our physiology was inherently dependent on efficient oxygen delivery and on the development of aerobic metabolic pathways.” However, it doesn’t matter if our ancestors could or did run long distances as part of their regular activities. The average person who is taking up running today, runs nothing like our ancestors. Seated desk work and poor body alignment greatly increase the risk of running and fitness related injuries. If you choose to participate in a running program, first find a personal trainer or physical therapist who can perform a thorough structural and movement assessment to identify imbalances and joint restrictions. New runners need to start gradually and progress slowly.

PAGE 4

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