

The Dead Bug

When you think of training your abs, what is the first exercise that comes to mind? Sit ups? Crunches? Russian twists? Oh the horror..... neck pain, back pain!

The abdominals have a function and they are a part of a bigger picture – the core. Consider the core being all the muscles in your torso (shoulder joint to hip joint) - transversus abdominis, multifidus, internal and external obliques, rectus abdominis, lower lats, upper back. All of these muscles help to stabilize and protect your spine during movement; therefore the core should be trained based on its function, not its anatomy.

The goal for working the core is not only to increase strength, but also to improve endurance in order to maintain a stable spine throughout a variety of daily activities and sport. With the goal of a stable spine for our limbs to work from in mind, it is important to choose core exercises that do not put unnecessary stress and strain on the spine.

What if there was a core exercise that gave more reward with less risk and trained your abdominals and functional core strength without hurting your back or neck? Core exercises simply should be about protecting the spine, not putting it at risk. There are simply better options, especially for developing core strength that carries into everyday life and sport.

Enter the Dead Bug - low risk, high reward. What is great about this exercise is that EVERYONE of all fitness levels can perform it. This exercise teaches your core to resist extension of your arms and legs and to isolate movement at the hips and shoulders without moving your spine. This exercise is considered 'anti-extension'.



Keys to Success:

- Lie on your back with your arms extended in front of your shoulders
- Bend your hips and knees to a 90-degree angle
- Press your lower back into the floor and brace your abs
- Slowly extend your left leg toward the floor and bring your right arm overhead
- Keep your abs tight and don't let your lower back arch
- ONLY extend your arm and leg as far as you can keep your back on the floor (for some it might not be very far, and that's ok!)
- Slowly return your arm and leg to the starting position.
- Repeat with your opposite arm and leg. Continue alternating.

Perform 5-10 per side, for 3-4 sets.