

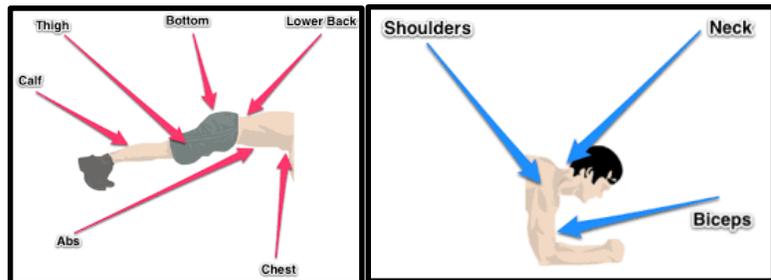
# How to Plank

The plank exercise is a challenging exercise that strengthens various muscles in the upper and lower body with a strong emphasis on the core. This isometric strengthening exercise is able to be performed in different variations and incorporate several muscle groups.



## I. Muscles Activated:

- Abdominals
- Back muscles
- Glutes
- Quadriceps
- Hamstrings
- Shoulders
- Chest & Arm muscles
- Calf muscles



## II. How to Complete a Plank:

- Start by lying on floor and place the elbows directly under your shoulders. The wrists must be in line with the elbows. Place feet together.
- Push body up by contracting abdominals and squeezing glutes and thigh muscles until spine is aligned in neutral position. (Figure 1) Avoid looking up or down in order to maintain neutral neck posture. Try to concentrate on staring at a specific object ahead of you to help sustain posture. Do not allow your neck or back to sag.
- Hold position for 20- 30 seconds. Rest for one minute. Repeat exercise 3-5 more times.
- Once you are able to complete the forearm plank, challenge yourself by holding the position for longer durations: 45-60 seconds.

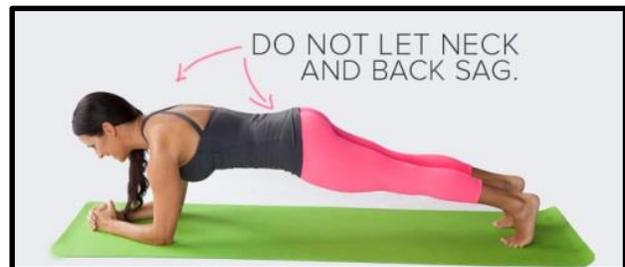


Figure 1: Forearm Plank

### III. Variations:



Figure 4: Extended Plank



Figure 2: Swiss Ball Plank



Figure 3: Modified Side Plank



Figure 5: Reverse Plank



Figure 6: Plank with Lateral Arm Reach



Figure 7: Side Plank

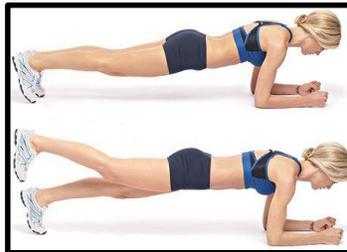


Figure 8: Plank with leg lifts



Figure 9: Renegade Row Planks



Figure 10: Medicine Ball Plank



Figure 11: Bosu Ball Plank

#### **IV. Benefits of Planks:**

- Tones core muscles
- Improves flexibility
- Increases balance and stability
- Reduces back pain
- Recruits muscles in the lower and upper body and core
- Boosts metabolism



#### **V. Avoiding Injury:**

- Focus on maintaining correct body posture before progressing the exercise. Do not allow your hips, shoulders, or neck to sink or rise while performing the plank exercise.
- Do not flex the neck or align the shoulders too far over top of the wrist.
- Focus on proper breathing while performing the exercise. Fully inhale and exhale.
- Begin the exercise by holding basic plank positions in shorter increments of time (10-30 seconds) before progressing to longer durations. Correct body posture is more important than duration to ensure that you are activating the targeted muscle groups.
- Perfect the basic plank before progressing to more challenging plank variations.
- Once you have mastered the basic plank, try to hold the plank position for a longer duration, such as 30-45 seconds, and then try 45-60 seconds. Then attempt to progress to the other various plank stances. If you begin to experience pain while performing the plank exercise, remember to focus on correct body posture, and modify the duration of the hold times.



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