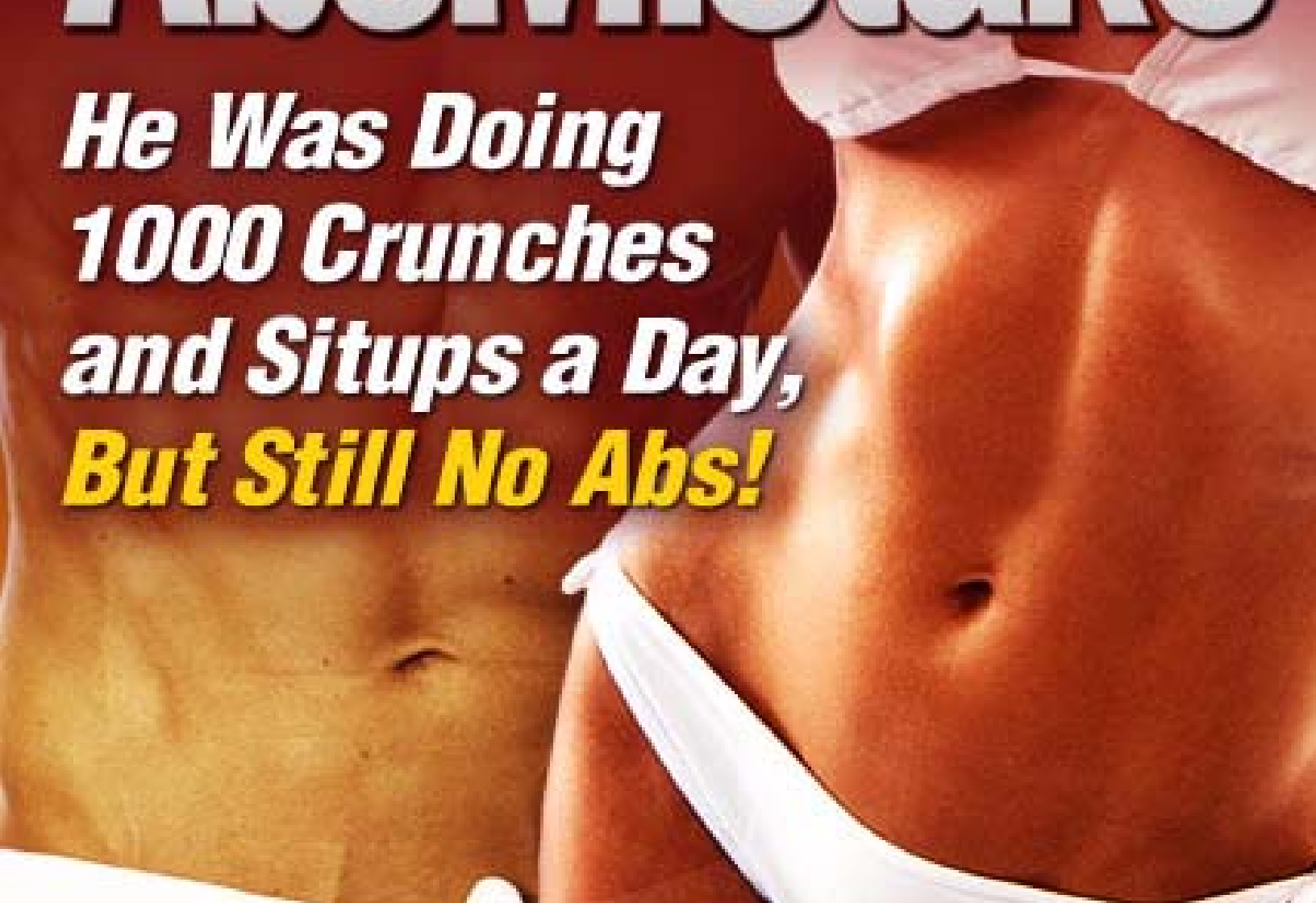


The Great **AbsMistake**

***He Was Doing
1000 Crunches
and Situps a Day,
But Still No Abs!***



**Straight Talk from Fat Loss Expert Tom Venuto,
Author of *Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle***

Tom Venuto CSCS, NSCA-CPT

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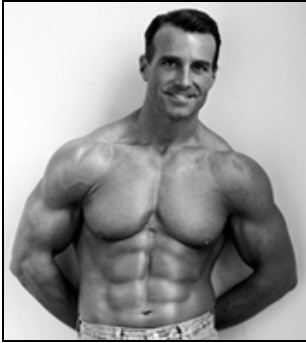
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THE GREAT ABS MISTAKE



After 18 years in the fitness business, “How do I get great abs” is still BY FAR the most frequently asked question I receive out of the over 30,000 emails that come into my office every month. No doubt it’s because abs are the one body part that most people are the most frustrated with.

Although their questions are often phrased differently and each person’s situation seems unique, my answer to “How do I get great abs” is almost always the same... and you’re about to hear it...

1,000 Sit-ups and Crunches a Day, and Still No Abs!

One question I received recently REALLY got my attention because a young guy told me he was doing 1,000 crunches and sit-ups a day and said he still couldn’t see his abdominals. He wrote:

Tom: I have been working out for around a year now and I cannot get my lower abs into any type of shape. I’m starting to see my upper abs a little bit, which is great, but despite doing 900 various crunches, ab roller, and 100 sit-ups four days a week, along with my regular workout on the weights, I still have a tire around my waist. What else can I do?

What did I tell him? Well, I gave him the same answer I’ve given thousands of people over the years, which is the only true “secret” to great abs...

It takes training to increase strength, build endurance and DEVELOP the abdominals, but to SEE the definition in your abdominals—or any other muscle group for that matter—is almost entirely the result of low body fat levels.

This may sound counter-intuitive, but if you can't see your abs, it's not an issue of "muscle development" at all. You simply have too much body fat covering up the ab muscles. The lower abdominal area also happens to be the one place that most people—especially men—store body fat first.

There's a Scientific Reason Why Your Lower Ab Flab Is the Last to Go: Belly Fat—A Big Problem



Most people don't have their fat distributed evenly throughout their bodies. Each of us inherits a genetically determined and hormonally-influenced pattern of fat storage just as we inherit our eye or hair color. In other words, the fat seems to "stick" to certain areas more than others.

There's a scientific reason for this. Your fat cells are not just inert "storage tanks" for excess fuel. They are actually endocrine glands which send and receive signals from the rest of the body. You could say that your fat cells "talk to your body" and your body "talks to your fat cells." This occurs through a hormone and receptor system.

For body fat loss to occur, you must first get the fat cells (adipocytes) to release the fat into the bloodstream. THEN, the free fatty acids must be delivered to the working muscles where they are burned for energy.

For fat to be released, the hormone adrenaline (epinephrine) must be secreted and send a signal to your fat cells. Your fat cells receive this hormonal signal via adrenaline receptors called adrenoreceptors.

Fat cells have Beta 1 (B1) and Alpha 2 (A2) receptors. B1 receptors are the good guys. They activate hormone-sensitive lipase, the enzyme that breaks down the fat and allows it to be released into the bloodstream to be burned. A2 receptors are the bad guys. They

block the fat-releasing enzymes in the fat cell and encourage body fat formation.

How Body Fat Storage Patterns Affect You and Keep Your Abs from Showing

What's the point of all this physiology? Well, it turns out that in men, the lower abdominal region has a higher concentration of A2 receptors, so this gives us one possible explanation of why the lower abdominal region is often the first place the fat goes when you gain it, and the last place it comes off when you're losing it. (Incidentally, the fat in women's hips and thighs is also higher in A2 receptors.) This situation is dictated by genetics and by the hormonal and enzymatic pathways just discussed.



Think of ab fat like the deep end of the swimming pool. No matter how much you protest, there is no way you can drain the deep end before the shallow end. However, don't let this discourage you. Lower ab fat WILL come off, it will simply be the last place to come off. Simply put: First place on, last place off.

This helps to explain why abdominal exercises have little impact on body fat loss. It's a huge mistake to think that hundreds or thousands of reps of ab exercises will remove lower abdominal fat, except to the degree that it burns calories and contributes to a calorie deficit. What removes the fat—all over your body—is a calorie deficit and that comes from decreasing food intake, increasing activity, or a combination of both.

What I suggested to this young man was cutting back the ab training, spending the time he was wasting on excess ab exercises for more intense, calorie-burning cardio and weight training for the rest of the body. I also suggested he do an accounting of his food intake, get his nutrition in order and decrease his calories slightly if necessary.

As it turned out, his diet was a mess, and as nutrition experts like to say, “You can’t out-train a lousy diet.”

It’s a monumental error to think that 1,000 reps of ab work a day will make your abs finally “pop” when your diet is a disaster and leads to fat storage. It’s not that ab exercises aren’t important. But all the ab exercises in the world won’t help as long as you still have body fat covering the muscles. You can’t “spot reduce” with abdominal exercise and **YOU CAN’T SEE YOUR ABS THROUGH A LAYER OF BODY FAT!**

My Championship-Winning Ab Workout Routine

Personally, I only do about 15 minutes of ab work two times per week, with anywhere from two to four exercises for about 10-25 reps per exercise. Forget about thousands of reps of sit-ups—it’s a waste of time. The reason my abs look the way they do is not from endless repetitions, but because I get my body fat down into the single digits with a highly specialized fat-burning diet program.

Here’s a recent ab routine that I’ve used (for bodybuilding/ab-development purposes). I do this routine only twice a week and I change the exercises approximately every month so my body doesn’t adapt. I prefer a slightly higher rep range than other muscle groups, but as you can see, it’s far from doing a thousand reps a day.

Superset	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
A	Hanging leg raises	3	15–20	0
	Hanging knee-ups (bent-knee leg raises)	3	15–20	60 seconds
B	Weighted Swiss ball crunches (or weighted cable crunches)	3	15–20	0
	Incline bench reverse crunches	3	15–20	60 seconds

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