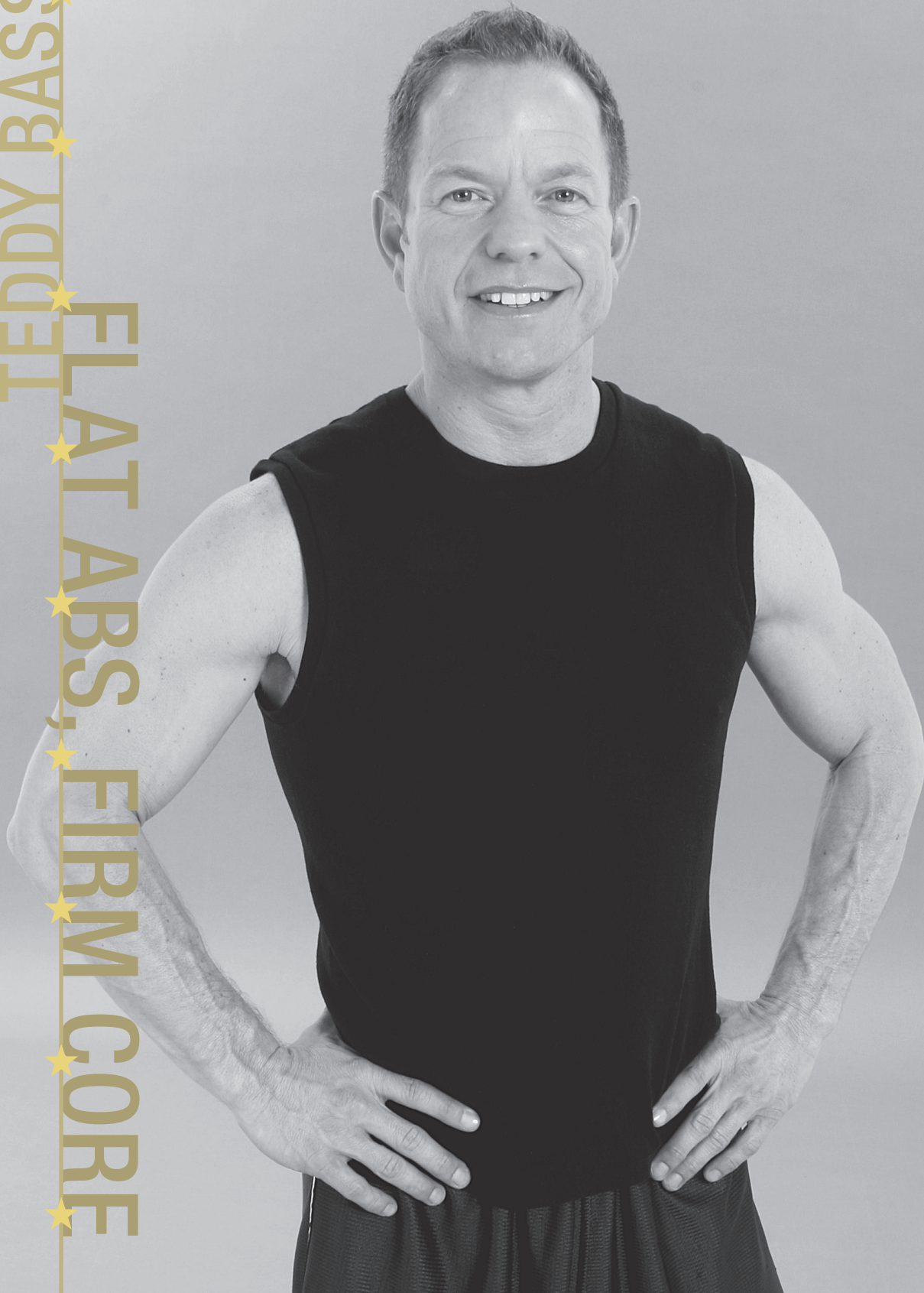


TEDDY BASS
FLAT ABS, FIRM CORE



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FLAT ABS, FIRM CORE

TRAINER: **Teddy Bass**

FLAT, FIRM ABS are more than just sexy: a strong core—which includes both the abdominals and lower-back muscles—is key to feeling good and performing at your best. Of course, looking great in a bikini also is a strong motivator for most women, including many of my clients.

But there's more than just swimsuit season to think about when working your abs. The core is the center of your body; it holds everything together. Almost every movement stems from your core, whether you're picking up a piece of paper off the floor or reaching up to a shelf in your closet. If you play sports like tennis or golf, a strong core will help you generate power; if you're a runner, it will give you better speed. And if you sit at a desk most of the day, it will help prevent low-back pain and other injuries. For some of my celeb clients—including Paris Hilton, Christina Applegate, and Lucy Liu—a strong, sexy middle is important in everything they do, whether it's performing stunts in a movie or just looking good in front of the cameras.

Most of the exercises in this chapter are designed to work all of your abdominal muscles, not just the visible “six-pack” rectus abdominis, but also your deep abs (transversus abdominis), obliques, and even your lower back. By strengthening all of these muscles, which wrap around the lower torso like a girdle, you'll get a lean, defined middle that looks good and works even better. Also, it's important to think about more than just crunches when it comes

to firming your midsection. Crunches are great for targeting the six-pack, but if you do only this exercise, you'll miss out on a big part of the ab-toning equation. When you're bending down to pick up an object or turning to one side, you're engaging your abdominals in several planes of motion. To keep your body strong and injury free, it's important to work in these multiple directions during ab exercises as well.

Along with gym-based moves like crunches, many of my favorite abdominal exercises also incorporate elements of Pilates. Designed in the 1920s by German innovator Joseph Pilates, these exercises focus on strengthening and toning the deep core muscles. One cue you'll frequently hear with Pilates

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 ★ **TIP:** Doing even dozens of basic crunches won't get you flat abs; that exercise is only part of the puzzle. To get results, you need to follow a well-rounded routine, targeting both the deep and superficial abdominal muscles.

is to "pull your navel in toward your spine." To do this, think about trying to zip up a tight pair of jeans. By doing so, you are engaging the deep transverse abdominals. The end result: a flat, firm middle.

The exercises here will also help keep you stable in other activities.

If you strengthen the core, you'll be better able to hold your body in position, whether it's running on the treadmill or lifting a weight above your head. They'll also isolate the muscles and make them stronger for their daily function.

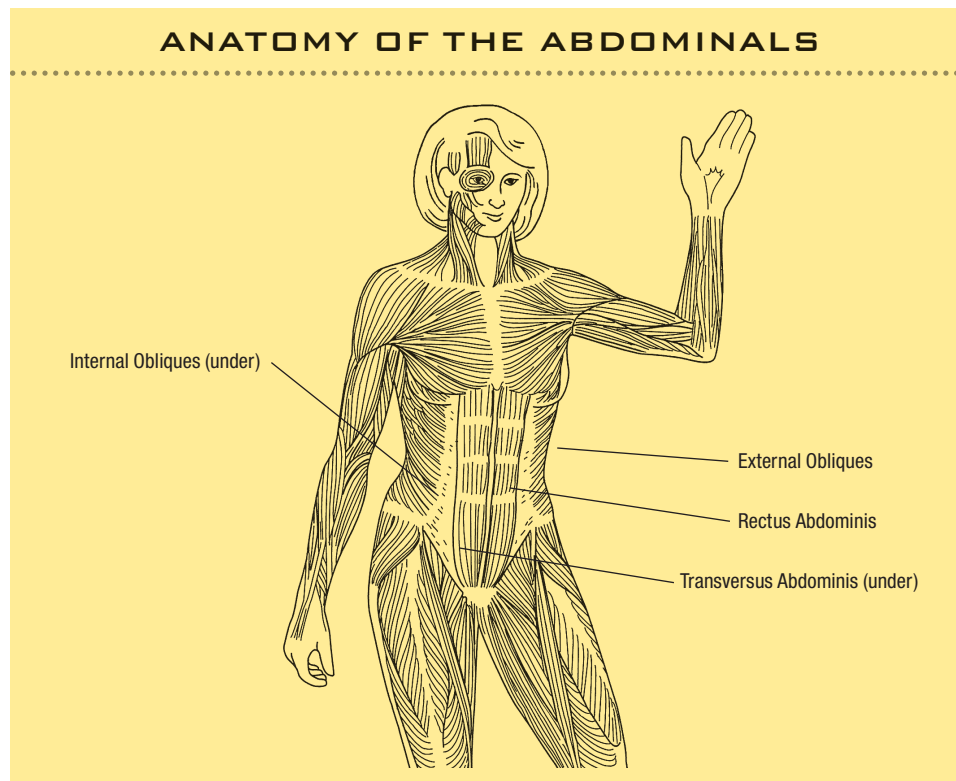
A few of the moves here involve a small, inflatable ball (like a children's gym ball or even a volleyball, basketball, or soccer ball) or a light medicine ball, although you can still perform the exercises without any equipment if you can't find a ball to use. I like to use the ball with my clients both as a visual cue and a challenging prop. Clients can follow their movements better by keeping their eyes on the ball, but they also have to work extra hard to keep it balanced in place during many of the moves.

The exercises in this chapter will help tighten and define the entire abdominal area. They'll improve your sports performance, reduce your risk of lower-back pain and other injuries, and even help you get more out of the other strength moves given in this book. But doing these exercises alone will not get you that eye-popping six-pack: to see that degree of definition, you must shed excess body fat by watching what you eat and burning calories through cardiovascular exercise. Combining all of these elements (diet, sculpting moves, and

fat-burning cardio) will go a long way toward helping you develop the flat, sexy abs that many celebs unveil both on screen and off.

ANATOMY OF THE ABDOMINALS

The abdominals are made up of four muscle groups. The most superficial of these is the rectus abdominis, or what most people think of as the “six-pack muscle.” The rectus extends vertically from the pubic bone to the sternum. It’s involved in flexion, or bending forward. The deepest muscle group is the transversus abdominis, which attaches to the lower ribs and spine and encircles the entire lower torso like a corset. This muscle group is responsible for spinal support and is crucial to overall core strength. Extending diagonally along the sides and back of the body from the lower ribs to the top of the pelvic bone are the external (superficial) and internal (deep) obliques. They are involved primarily in twisting moves.



★ THE FLAT ABS WORKOUT

BENT-KNEE HUNDRED

The bent-knee hundred is a Pilates-based move that isolates the deep abdominals, making you more aware of the muscles that you are working. Pumping your arms during the exercise increases heart rate and blood flow, making it the perfect way to start your abdominal workout.

1 Lie faceup on the floor, with knees bent 90 degrees and pulled toward chest, and arms extended above shoulders, palms facing knees. ▶

2 Lift head, keeping neck neutral and chin tucked. Extend arms along sides, and “pump” arms by lifting and lowering palms about 2 inches up and down from the floor. Inhale fully for a count of 5 pumps; then exhale for another 5 pumps. Continue pulsing arms, and follow this breathing pattern, counting to 100. Keep abdominals pulled in throughout the exercise. ▼

3 To increase the intensity, straighten the legs, keeping them on about a 45-degree angle to the floor. ▶



TUCK SLIDE

The tuck slide uses a small inflatable ball or light medicine ball, although you can still get some benefit out of doing the move without any props. Keeping the ball in place with your elbows and legs forces you to incorporate more of your abdominal muscles, giving you a more challenging variation to the standard bicycle crunch.



1 Lie faceup on floor, holding a small ball in both hands, legs extended. Lift head, neck, and shoulders off the floor, and bring knees in toward chest. Bend elbows together, balancing the ball between elbows and knees. ◀

2 Keeping upper body lifted and abs pulled in, slowly slide ball toward left knee, turning right shoulder toward left leg; at the same time, straighten right leg. ▶



3 Return to center; repeat, this time moving ball toward right knee while straightening left leg. Repeat, moving ball from side to side. ◀



★ **TIP:** Don't just go by a scale. So many people focus on weight, and that's tangible, but the best way to judge is how your clothes feel.

ROLL-UP WITH BALL

The roll-up with ball is a very challenging move that engages the obliques, rectus abdominis, and transversus abdominis. The slower you go, the more difficult the exercise.



1 Lie faceup with knees bent 90 degrees and feet planted on floor, holding ball overhead between both hands, arms extended near ears. ◀



2 Slowly lift head, neck, shoulders, and upper back, bringing ball overhead and toward the legs; keep abdominals pulled in toward spine. Hold 1 count, pressing ball forward.



3 Reverse position, and slowly roll back, one vertebra at a time, toward the floor, bringing ball back past ears and above head. Do 5 to 6 reps total. To increase the challenge, extend one leg off the floor at a 45-degree angle. For an even more advanced variation, keep both legs 45 degrees off the floor, and roll the ball toward toes at top of movement. ▼



AROUND THE WORLD

“Around the World” is a Pilates-based exercise that engages all of the abdominals, especially the obliques. Focus on moving slowly and with control, using your whole torso.

1 Lie faceup on the floor with knees bent, feet flat on floor, and hands behind head with elbows out to sides. Bend left knee, crossing left ankle over right knee. Lift shoulders as high as possible, bringing left elbow and shoulder toward right knee. ▶



2 Return to center, and crunch up, keeping left ankle on right knee. ◀

3 Lower back to start, and repeat, this time bringing right shoulder toward left knee. Continue, moving from right to left with each rep. Repeat for the given number of reps, and then switch legs and repeat, moving from left to right. ▼

★ **TIP:** Ab exercises are the last thing that most people want to do in their workouts. Your best bet is to eliminate the temptation to cut the moves out by doing them either first thing or between other exercises, creating small circuits.



FAVORITE AB DEVICES

Late-night TV broadcasts are filled with fitness infomercials promising to give you flat abs with the touch of a button—or at least the quick-and-easy help of a tummy-toning fitness device. The truth is, most of this equipment gives only your wallet a workout. But there are a few fitness gadgets that can help you shape a sexy middle. Here are a few of my favorites:

➔ **Foam rollers:** These devices, which have their roots in physical therapy, are like an oversized pool noodle. Most are about three feet long and six inches in radius, and they're a great way to improve balance, flexibility, and core strength. Lie on a roller to do basic moves like crunches; place it under your hands or feet as an extra balancing challenge for moves like push-ups or curls. Or just use it as a massage device to iron out some kinks in your muscles. (See Chapter 13 for more details about flexibility training with the foam roller.)

➔ **Bosu:** This hybrid device—part stability ball, part step platform—marries form and function in a truly unique way. You can use the Bosu (now available in many health clubs and at sporting goods stores) as a balancing challenge; forcing your body to stay stable will incorporate the abdominals, even while you're working other muscle groups. Stand on it to do squats or lunges; lie on it to intensify crunches and sit-ups. You'll especially work the transversus (deep) abdominal muscles.

➔ **Medicine balls:** They've been used by weight lifters for decades, but recently even casual exercisers are discovering the benefits of these weighted balls. Medicine balls come in several different weights, usually in kilograms; calculate 2.2 kilograms for 1 pound. They're great for power movements (throwing or catching the ball), and they provide added resistance for moves like crunches or twists.

★ **TIP:** Everyone wants to find the quickest, fastest way to lose weight, but fasting should not be one of them; it just doesn't work. You'll lower your metabolism and make shedding pounds even harder. A better strategy is to graze. Your body will learn to burn calories more efficiently if you eat small amounts throughout the day.

THREE-PART CRUNCH COMBO

The three-part crunch combo works with all of the abdominal muscles while also stretching the glutes and hamstrings.

1 Lie faceup on floor with right knee bent 90 degrees and foot lifted off floor, left knee bent with left ankle crossed over right knee. Place hands behind head, elbows out to the sides. Raise upper body, bringing right shoulder toward left knee. ▶

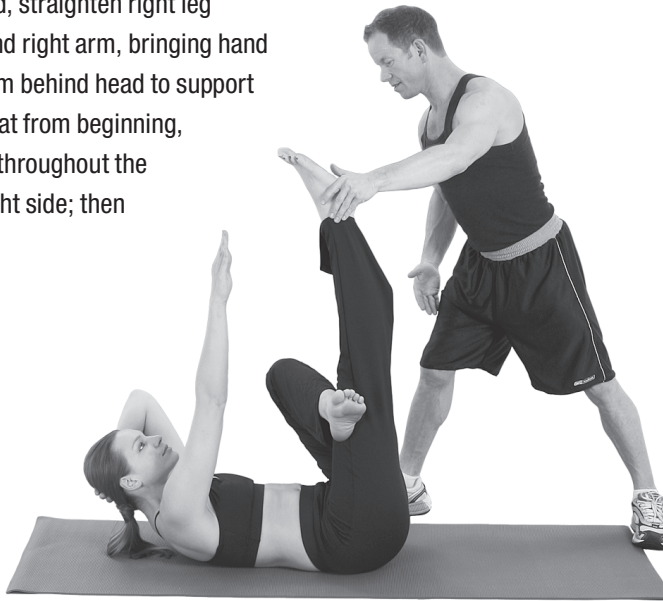
★ **TIP:** Be conscious of your calorie intake. Exercise is a great way to burn calories, but if you are eating more than you are expending, you will not lose weight.



2 At the top of the movement, lift lower back and tailbone off the floor in a reverse crunch. Be careful not to swing your hips or use too much momentum. ▶



3 Keeping upper body lifted, straighten right leg toward ceiling, and extend right arm, bringing hand toward right toes. Keep left arm behind head to support neck. Lower to start, and repeat from beginning, keeping abdominals pulled in throughout the exercise. Do all the reps on right side; then switch sides and repeat. ▶



★ **TIP:** You can't do just all cardio or all strength; you need to do a mix of both, especially if your goal is weight loss. If your aim is to lose twelve pounds in six weeks, it can happen, but you'll need to make a commitment of doing five to six days of cardio and strength training a week. And you have to make sure your goal is realistic.

★ **TIP:** Try not to overeat in the evenings. I try not to snack or eat after 9 P.M. Make a conscious effort not to eat two hours before you go to bed—your digestion slows down 65 percent when you're sleeping, which affects your metabolism. A lot of times, people won't eat a lot during the day, so when they get home, they're starving. Even my celebrity clients have to face this: they're not in a typical nine-to-five job, but they're on the go all day long, so they end up taking in more calories at night. You have to make an effort to eat a healthful breakfast, and then snack on good foods throughout the day. This way, you'll have more energy all day long.

★ **TIP:** Consistency in exercise is the key. Whether you have a sudden change of dinner plans or you're on the road promoting a movie, it's important to stay consistent with your fitness program. Things like travel and a time difference can play havoc with a celeb's fitness program, so I try to make it easier for them by designing workouts they can do on the road. You don't need a gym to exercise; resistance bands or even just your own body weight can be enough to give you a good strength workout.

PLANK PULL

The weight of your leg acts as added resistance in the plank pull, increasing the intensity of the exercise. Do this move in two parts: do all the leg lifts first, then all the knee pulls. If you need to, rest with your knees on the floor, or come into a child's pose (sitting back on heels with arms extended in front of you). To increase the challenge, this exercise can be done with your hands on a stability ball or Bosu.



- 1 Begin in a full push-up position, with palms on floor aligned under shoulders and legs fully extended. Keep shoulders pressed down, hips lifted, and back firm, forming a straight line from head to heels. ◀

2 Raise right foot to hip level; keep hips level and facing floor. Hold for 5 full counts. Rest, and then repeat 5 times (not shown). Next, pull right knee toward left shoulder; hold 2 to 3 counts. Repeat 3 to 5 times; return to center, and repeat on opposite leg, resting on knees if necessary between sides. ▶



3 For a more advanced move, keep both legs on a stability ball, and draw knees toward chest. ◀



★ **TIP:** The biggest challenge for a lot of my celebrity clients is getting them to adhere to a workout program while traveling. If they're in a big production schedule and are working all day or night, they still have to make time to get in exercise. Getting results takes determination and dedication.

★ **TIP:** Set realistic goals. If you want to lose weight, plan a reasonable end goal, and don't plan to lose more than two and a half pounds per week. Realistic goals are the most achievable. People look at celebrities like Cameron Diaz and think, "I want to have a body like that," but there's a lot of genetics involved. Hard work will pay off, but you have to be realistic about your end results. And think beyond just weight loss: plan on seeing more muscular development on your arms, or just set your goal of doing cardio three times a week for a month. Taking baby steps and setting a goal of achieving something tangible like losing a few pounds in one month will help you stay on track and reach your long-term goals.