



## Finding Your Abs Again

by Chrissie Morgan Sulless

Every Saturday I drop my 5 year old daughter off at ballet class at the community center and head down the San Clemente Beach Trail for a run. It's wonderful to see so many residents taking advantage of the trail. People are walking, jogging, pushing strollers, riding bikes, and walking their dogs. As I take a deep breath of the morning salt air I look out to see black wetsuits in the water sitting on surfboards, waiting for the perfect wave. I pass a few volleyball courts that more often than not have a game going. There are groups of people in fitness classes doing lunges, crunches, and other exercises on the sand.

It is nice to live in such an active community. But as a physical therapist I can't help but analyze posture and movement of all the activity around me. I wonder if all of these people who are trying to improve their health in one form or another know that they could make a few minor adjust-

ments to the way they are exercising and get far better results? Would they be willing to change their poor habits and in exchange for more efficient ones that require them to do less and increase their body awareness? What would they say if I told them they could lose 2 inches in their waist without dieting?

Remember, the way in which you hold your body during exercise is the way in which it will get stronger. If you are not in optimal posture or recruiting the target muscle groups correctly you will end up becoming **Strong Wrong**. Being strong wrong can even result in creating an injury over time.

That kid in the movie Jerry McGuire was right, the human head weighs on average 8 pounds. If it rests in a forward position, the body perceives it to be 12 pounds, causing your shoulders to follow your head and your upper back to round. Your rib cage will fall lower resulting (Continue on page 3)

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### Challenge Your Fitness Routine

**Pilates Circuit Training**

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# Exercises to Help Find Your Abs Again

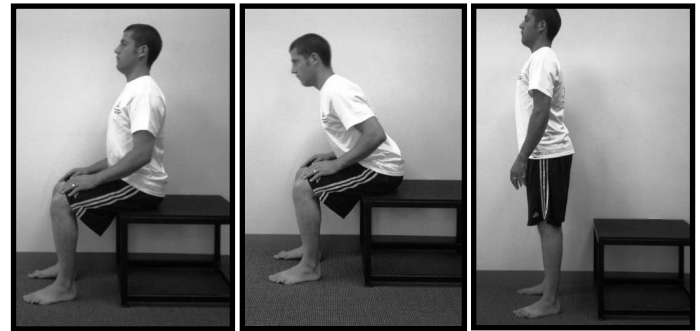
**Posture Check:** Stand in front of the mirror and take a look where your body lives. Then stand sideways and check your posture in that position. To create the most efficient posture do these 4 things:

- Make sure you have the same amount of weight on your toes and heels
- Bring shoulders up toward your head and roll them back
- Make your neck longer by imagining a string pulling the top of your head up to the sky
- Bring your pelvis back to midline while bringing the muscles below your belly button up and in slightly.



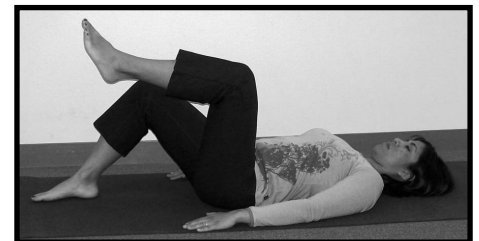
**Sit to Stand:** Another way to increase your awareness of your abs and how you move during your daily routine is to get up from a sitting position correctly.

- Scoot to the edge of your chair.
- Rock pelvis forward so you are sitting on your ‘SITS’ bones and have a mild arch in your low back.
- Engage your lower abdominals (the ones underneath your belly button) by bringing them up and in as if to tuck them underneath your rib cage.
- Bring your arms out in front of you and stand by lifting from your abdominals and engaging your gluteal muscles to push your bottom off the chair.



**Lower Abdominals with Marching:** While sit ups are effective to work your upper rectus region, the lower abdominals require a different approach. This exercise will target the lower portion of the rectus while protecting your back at the same time.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent.
- Find your neutral spine by finding the midway position between fully arching your back and flattening your back on the ground.  
\* Your back should NOT be Flat against the ground.
- Roll your shoulders back to allow your rib cage to open without increasing the arch in your back.
- As you exhale, lift your lower abs up and in as if lifting them up underneath the rib cage.
- On your next exhale, lift one of your legs up as if lifting the leg from your abs- not your hip. Return to start as you breath in.
- Repeat with opposite leg.
- Repeat until you cannot hold a proper neutral spine position.



# Finding Your Abs Again

(Continued from page 1)

in the loss of being able to recruit your lower abdominals and potentially causing all kinds of postural dysfunctions.

I never really thought much about how I was exercising until I had kids. Even though my youngest is now 3½ I have found that not everything has gone back to where it was pre-children, particularly my abdominals. Finding my abs again was something I had to really work at all day long, every day. It is much harder than just exercising for an hour 3-4 days per week, but the result is that my abs are getting a work out with everything I do, from walking to bending, to getting in and out of a chair. It allows me to function at a high level, get the most out of the work outs I can fit in to my busy schedule, and gives me built in injury prevention.

## Community Corner

**Visit us at the San Clemente Ocean Festival on July 18-19th**

**Free Posture Assessment and BMI Testing**

**Enter to win a Private Pilates Session or an Organic T-shirt**



## Success Story

Ashley Adams started physical therapy after she sprained her ankle while conditioning for her high school track team. Her ankle was weak and she could not balance on that leg. After just a few months of physical therapy focusing on strength, dynamic exercise, plyometrics and balance,



Ashley was able to complete her 2009 Track & Field season.

*“The Physical Therapists and aides were tremendously friendly and the exercises really helped me to improve my condition. I run track and did very well at finals!”  
Ashley Adams*

Any Questions about what you’ve read? Give us a call directly at (714) 546-7575 in Costa Mesa, (949) 366-3362 in San Clemente or visit our website at [www.BodyAwarenessPT.com](http://www.BodyAwarenessPT.com)



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## Healthy Hints—Summertime Reminders

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1. Stay hydrated— Divide your weight in half and drink that many ounces of water each day (If you weigh 150 lbs, drink 75 oz of water)
2. Check expiration dates— Sunscreens have expiration dates, usually stamped into the end of the tube. Replace sunscreens before they expire to stay protected. Remember UV Rays are strongest between 10am and 4pm.
3. Dress right— Wear light, loose fitting clothes made of breathable fabrics like cotton.
4. Watch for heat exhaustion— Symptoms include profuse sweating, paleness, dizziness, headaches and muscle cramps. Cool off quickly with a cool shower, drink cool water and stay in the air conditioning for the rest of the day. Heat illness can be fatal if not treated.
5. Rinse and dry after you swim— Rinse off after being in a public pool, fresh or salt water to avoid skin irritations. Pat dry and make sure to dry your ears to prevent Swimmer's Ear.