

## The MIHP Think Tank

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## Pass the Six Pack!

Tracy Ryckaert, PTA, NSCA-CPT

I am officially giving you permission to stop doing sit-ups and crunches!

Now I am not in any way telling you to stop working your “core”, but I am telling you to stop teaching the abdominal muscles to produce a motion they do not do in function. If you are going to take the time to strengthen your core muscles you should focus on the muscles that stabilize and drive your body during your sport or activity. Let’s take a quick look at the muscles that are lined up to do the job.

The rectus abdominus (the six pack muscle) is the muscle that is primarily worked with crunches and sit-ups, but has very little to do with stabilization of the low back during extremity movement. The muscles that are responsible for this form of stabilization are the transverse abdominus, the internal and external obliques and multifidus. These muscles are the deepest muscles, the ones that lie closest to the spine and therefore, the ones that provide the greatest stability. You don’t need to memorize the names of these muscles but I can’t emphasize enough the importance of paying them greater attention with your workouts.

The transverse abdominus is activated with rapid movement of the lower and upper extremities and by “drawing in “ of the waist. You can begin activating this muscle at the next red traffic light you come to. Pull your belly button away from your pant-line and hold this contraction, which will automatically place you in a better posture, until the light turns green and then release it. We call this exercise the “traffic light squeeze”. If you are doing it right, you will feel taller, not shorter, and you will still be able to talk and breath. It is the kind of action you do when you are bracing yourself against something.

Progress this exercise into the plank. Come to the top of a push up on your toes and forearms. Your elbows should be directly under your shoulders. Hold your body in a straight line for 30 seconds, progress this time up to a minute for three repetitions. This exercise is better than 1,000 sit-ups for stabilizing your spine. These base movements will build stability and strength and the following dynamic movement will begin building power.

If you still want more, do some sky reaches! Begin at the top of the push up on your hands and toes, be sure your hands are placed directly under your shoulders and feet about shoulder width apart. Reach with your right arm up toward the sky. Return to the starting position and repeat the same motion with the left arm. Begin doing 3-5 repetitions on each arm and progress to 10 on each arm for three sets.

Before you know it this contraction will become second nature and all of your exercises will become an abdominal work out.

Stay tuned for more dynamic core strength in April’s newsletter.

To subscribe to the e-newsletter, Synergy:  
[www.mihp.net](http://www.mihp.net)

## Running to victory

In January, Brad Kegebien and Tracy Ryckaert of MIHP had the opportunity to assist twenty incredible individuals cross the finish line of the Miami ING ½ marathon. These individuals came together from all walks of life but sharing one common goal, which was to raise awareness for the need to fight for a cure to Crohn's disease and colitis.

This was an inaugural year for "Team Challenge" which is sponsored by the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation. This foundation is the leader in the fight to cure these devastating diseases, which will affect 30,000 new cases this year. Six chapters (states) of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation participated in this event, raising over one million dollars for foundation research.

Each one of these participants began their venture by committing to raise \$3,500 and then started their training to either run or walk the 13.1 mile distance. The majority of the team were patients of either Crohn's or Colitis themselves so the challenges of training for such an event went beyond building mileage but required altering diets, managing nutrition, mapping out specific running/walking routes. Many were set back in their training due to bouts with their symptoms, some even hospitalized. Other's joined the team to support loved ones or close friends and with their team mates fought through the 2008 Michigan winter weather to do their training runs in snow, ice, winds and below zero temps. In the end, each one of these nineteen individuals conquered their goal, came together as a team and experienced an abundance of emotions as they crossed the finish line of their first half marathon. Congratulations to our MIHP athletes' of the month.

To find out more information about joining Team Challenge you can contact the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation at: **Ellen Sherwood (248) 737-0900**



Tracy Ryckaert and Brad Kegebien from MIHP with the Team Challenge participants from the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation in Miami, Florida.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 12 - Walk Pain-Free and Run Pain-Free (GM Pontiac HQ)

March 13 - Functional Strength Training (MIHP)

March 13 - Sports Nutrition Seminar (MIHP)

April 4 - The Missing Links of the Shoulder (MIHP)

## Exercise of the month - The Wall Wash

Look in the mirror. Is one shoulder higher than the other? If so, this may be a cause of headaches, shoulder pain and even tendonitis in the elbow or shoulder. You can fix this postural asymmetry by doing a simple exercise: the wall wash.

Stand approximately 2 feet from a wall. Place your hands on the wall. Slide your right hand up the wall as you shift your weight to your right leg. Imagine stretching a string from your right heel to over your head. Return to the starting position and then slide your left hand up the wall as you shift your weight to your left leg. Stretch the left side of your body with this motion. Alternate reaching with right and left hands. Perform 10-15 repetitions on each side.

