



STOMACH VACUUMING

The New Way To Get Flat Abs

Forget crunches, this is the exercise that will get you a toned tummy, fast...



It's the hashtag that fitness bloggers, trainers and celebs are all going mad over – with videos devoted to the practice all over Instagram. But what exactly is #stomachvacuuming? Although it may *sound* like a cosmetic procedure, it's actually anything but. Stomach vacuuming is the fast-track fitness hack, derived from Pilates and yoga breathing principles, that helps to tone the inner abs (known to give you that hourglass shape). We spoke to Claire Finlay, founder and personal trainer at Pilates and boxing studio Transition Zone, to find out how to master it. Bring on the Michelle Keegan-esque tummy...

■ What Is It?

'The concept is to draw your belly button in for a period of time,' explains Claire. But, while it is essentially breathing in and out, it's vital you do this properly. 'If you imagine you're pulling your stomach in deep to put on a pair of trousers, it will help get your form right,' adds Claire.

■ When Should I Do It?

'Once you've learnt the technique, you can do it in the car, at your desk or at home,' says Claire. 'It doesn't require the use of any equipment, so I often tell my clients to put little notes on their dashboard or kettle reminding them to do it when they're stuck in a traffic jam or making a cup of tea.' With enough practice, you'll

eventually get to the stage where you're naturally pulling your belly button in towards your spine when you're just standing, leading to better posture which, in turn, makes you look slimmer. So no more slouching in morning meetings!

■ What Results Will I See?

'If you train these ab muscles regularly, they will pull your stomach inward, making it look flat, even in a relaxed state. And new mums, listen up! It's great to do after having a baby, as it also tightens the pelvic floor.' Practise three times a week to see a difference within a fortnight. We're doing it right this second...

How To Stomach Vacuum

- The basic form of the exercise is best done in a position where your body is curved forward. Try with your hands and knees on the floor, or from a standing position, slightly bent over with your hands on the table. However, once you get the technique right, it can be done in almost any position, including lying down.
- Slowly inhale as much as possible for three to five seconds.

Exhale through your mouth, drawing your stomach towards your spine as tight as possible. Try to visualise your navel touching your spine. Hold the contraction for a count of 20. Breathe normally while you hold the contraction.

- Repeat the exercise for five rounds, building up to ten once you get more used to it.