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Want a flatter tummy? Should you try sit-ups or pole dancing?



Just about everyone wants a flatter, more toned stomach

and most of us have probably tried to get one at some point. But are sit-ups really the way to athletic abs or just a whole lot of pain for no real gain? Is there a better option?

We asked two volunteers — both keen to turn the tables on their burgeoning bellies — to put tummy toning to the test. One stuck to traditional sit-ups using a Swiss ball, while the other tried a cheeky new alternative: pole dancing.

Our sit-ups volunteer, Nicola, has half-heartedly walked down this path many times before, even splashing out on an ab machine. She agreed to give sit-ups one more go. Pole-dancing volunteer, Erika, suspected that her body was getting a little ahead of itself. She took up the challenge to try pole dancing.

To keep the playing field level over the eight-week trial, Erika attended one 45-minute pole-dancing class a week, while Nicola performed a less taxing 20-minute sit-ups program twice a week.

Before the girls began, we needed to measure the current state of their stomach muscles. We tested their abdominal endurance using the plank test and abdominal strength with an angle test. And of course, we took a visual reference.

At the halfway point, both girls were happy with their progress and felt that they were beginning to see the benefits. Nicola, however, was finding her sit-ups program to be a bit of a grind, while Erika was loving the social and athletic aspects of pole dancing.

Results

After eight weeks, we performed the same tests with the girls to see how their respective programs stacked up.

This video requires the Adobe Flash Player. Download a free version of the player.

When we re-tested their abdominal endurance, we found Nicola's results were much improved while Erika had made steady gains.

- Nicola: sit-ups
- Original score: 1:12 minutes
- New score: 2:33 minutes Erika: pole dancing
- Original score: 1:52 minutes
- New score: 2:33 minutes

The strength test revealed quite the opposite, with Erika making a great leap forward, while Nicola struggled to even match her original score.

- Nicola: sit-ups
- Original score: 126 degrees (grade 3)
- New score: 107 degrees (grade 2)
- Erika: pole dancing
- Original score: 118 degrees (grade 2) New score: 124 degrees (grade 3)

But the big question of course is: who's abs are looking the goods? Well, Nicola's clearly on track with modest but steady improvement to her stomach's definition while Erika has made striking gains with both a flatter tummy and

Conclusion

better defined abs.

Our trial shows that while sit-ups are an effective way to flatten and tone your stomach, they're definitely not the best

Pole dancing not only works your abs to give you a flatter, toned tummy but it will help give you stronger abs and therefore a stronger, more stable body core. But the big bonus is that it's also a great kilojoule-burning cardio workout, which helps trim away excess fat to make sure everyone else can appreciate your new stomach as much as you do.

For more information on the best way to achieve a flat stomach head to SHANNON CLEARY at www.shannonclearly.com.au

Shannon Cleary is a co-owner and director of one of Sydney's most reputable and established health and fitness companies, Clean Health Pty Ltd which operates out of Sydney's Lower North Shore, CBD and Eastern Suburbs. Clean Health believe in a down to earth, no nonsense and honest approach to exercise and health education for every body. With 20+ years of experience to share, Shannon can teach you the importance of reducing stress, eating "real" nutrition, training PLUS creating hormonal harmony in your body!

For more information on pole dancing for fun and fitness visit www.studioverve.com.au

Studio Verve Dance Fitness, Sydney's longest established Pole Dancing for Fitness Studio has been delivering its signature PoleFit courses to women of all ages and sizes. PoleFit sculpts the body with long lean muscles, strengthens the core, tones the upper and lower body, increases flexibility and burns calories. In addition a pole dancing session helps release stress and gives your self confidence a boost. Get fit the fun way with PoleFit!

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