

21  
DAY

# PLANK CHALLENGE

## YOUR CORE MATTERS

You use your core muscles all day, every day—getting dressed, brushing your teeth, picking up a package and even standing still. Core muscles make up your pelvis, back, hips and abdomen and are the link that connects your upper and lower body in all movements.

## READY TO JOIN THE CHALLENGE?

Research suggests that it takes 21 days to create a habit. Let's put this idea to work—literally. Start your own 21-Day Plank Challenge and track your progress using the 21-Day Plank Challenge calendar on the next page.

## WHAT IS A PLANK?

A plank is an isometric core-strengthening exercise and involves maintaining one position for an extended period. The exercise uses many muscles in your body. The rectus abdominis (outer abs) and transverse abdominis (inner abs) are primary supporters during this exercise, and obliques (side abs) stabilize the position. Other muscles work to hold the plank position, including your legs, arms, shoulders and back.

### **The core purposes of a plank:**

- Strengthen abs and muscles
- Build stamina
- Develop a stronger core to support the lower back, which can improve posture and reduce back pain
- Improve balance, stability and posture
- Build a stronger core to help you in all types of physical activities, from running and hiking to weightlifting and yoga
- Train your entire core to establish your six-pack muscles, as well as your internal and external obliques
- Train your core muscles to work together with the muscles in your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen

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## PLANK CHALLENGE

### CALENDAR

Start your own 21-Day Plank Challenge and follow the plank calendar below. The key to success is building on your core and ab strength by holding your planks longer each day.

Start wherever you feel comfortable. Follow our time recommendations in the calendar, or create your own challenge by filling in the blank spaces with your time goal each day. Try the different plank positions demonstrated on page 3, or get creative and come up with your own plank. Cross off each day you complete the challenge.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>Day 1</b> 15 Seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 2</b> 20 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 3</b> 30 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 4</b> 40 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 5</b> 50 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 6</b> <b>REST</b>
<b>Day 7</b> 1 minute My time goal: _____	<b>Day 8</b> 1 minute, 10 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 9</b> 1 minute, 20 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 10</b> 1 minute, 30 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 11</b> 1 minute, 40 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 12</b> <b>REST</b>	<b>Day 13</b> 1 minute, 50 seconds My time goal: _____
<b>Day 14</b> 2 minutes My time goal: _____	<b>Day 15</b> 2 minutes, 10 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 16</b> 2 minutes, 20 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 17</b> 2 minutes, 30 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 18</b> <b>REST</b>	<b>Day 19</b> 2 minutes, 40 seconds My time goal: _____	<b>Day 20</b> 2 minutes, 50 seconds My time goal: _____
<b>DAY 21</b> 3 minutes My time goal: _____						

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## PLANK CHALLENGE

### PLANK -1-



#### STANDARD PLANK Forearms and toes

1. Begin in a pushup position with your face down and your forearms and toes on the floor. Be sure your elbows are directly under your shoulders and your palms are facing down. Your neck should be straight with your face parallel to the floor.
2. Engage your abdominal muscles, drawing your navel toward your spine. Keep your torso and body straight in a line from your ears to your toes with no sagging and bending. This is the neutral spine position. Ensure your shoulders are down and are not creeping up toward your ears. Your heels should be over the balls of your feet.

### PLANK -2-



#### MODIFIED PLANK Forearms and knees

1. Begin in a pushup position with your face down and on your forearms and knees (not on your toes). Rest your weight on your forearms instead of your hands.
2. Engage your abdominal muscles, drawing your navel toward your spine. Keep your torso straight. Ensure your shoulders are down and are not creeping up toward your ears. Your knees should rest on the mat. Avoid sagging your hips.

### PLANK -3-



#### STRAIGHT ARM PLANK Hands and toes

1. Get into a pushup position by supporting your body weight on your hands and toes. Your hands should be positioned directly under your shoulders.
2. Keep your abdominal muscles contracted, your back straight and your eyes ahead of you.