

Eating to Achieve Six-Pack Abs

Endless crunches at the gym won't get you anywhere if you don't take a second look at your diet

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Abs are made in the kitchen; at least that's what many fitness professionals will tell you when asked for advice about how to achieve the ever elusive "six pack." Although popular and catchy, this phrase is a tiny bit misleading.

Yes, for most people the ability to maintain finely chiseled abdominal muscles requires adherence to a very strict diet, but eating the right foods, no matter how healthy or high in protein, won't "make" your abs.

If you want a six-pack, first and foremost you have to build your abdominal muscles. Think about it, you can continue to decrease your body fat by following a "clean" diet and doing tons of cardio exercise, but if you haven't trained to build those muscles, well then there won't be any six-pack there to reveal.

So really, the saying should be something like, "abs are revealed in the kitchen." I guess that's not as catchy, though.

Regardless, before you set out to achieve a six pack, just remember that it will require you to pay detailed attention to both your diet and exercise routine, as well as several other aspects of your health, like your sleeping habits and alcohol consumption.

What exactly does a six-pack abs diet look like?

If it's a svelte stomach that you're after, New York Certified Fitness trainer and nutritionist **Franci Cohen** suggests compiling a meal plan that is mostly made up of nutrient-rich whole foods.

"If you feel like a hamster on a treadmill and are fed up with doing endless crunches for minimal results, it is time you turn to your kitchen," she said.

A few food examples that **Cohen** mentioned include oats, which are high in fiber but low in calories, boiled eggs, milk, chicken, salmon and other fish for protein, the most important nutrient for building muscle mass, and nuts as a healthy source of fat.

"Many people spend endless hours in the gym dreaming of getting an 'ideal' body but they fail to do so because they don't follow a proper diet plan," said **Cohen**.

In addition to incorporating whole foods in your diet, **Cohen** suggests reducing your fat and carb intake and almost entirely eliminating added sugar.