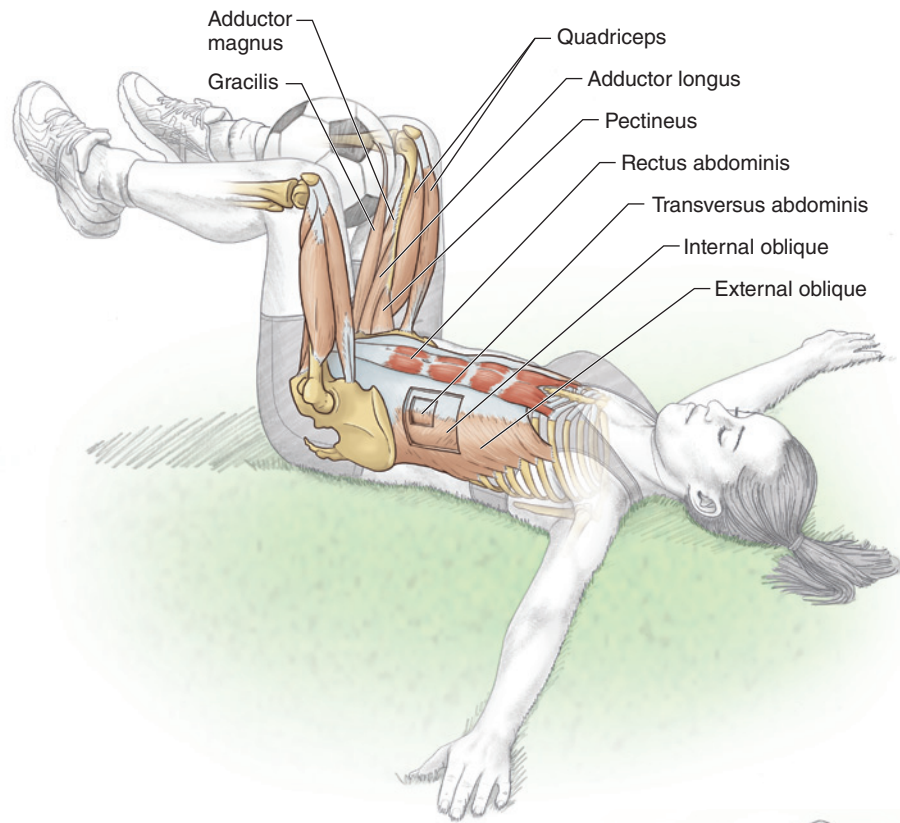


Soccer Ball Crunch



Execution

1. Lie on your back, arms stretched to the sides and knees bent with thighs perpendicular to the ground. Squeeze a soccer ball between your knees.
2. Pull your knees toward your chest by lifting your pelvis off the ground, trying to get your lower legs perpendicular to the ground.
3. Slowly return your hips and legs to the starting position.

Muscles Involved

Primary: Rectus abdominis

Secondary: External oblique, internal oblique, transversus abdominis, quadriceps (vastus medialis, vastus lateralis, vastus intermedius, rectus femoris), hip flexors (psoas major and minor, iliacus), adductors (adductor magnus, adductor longus, adductor brevis, pectineus, gracilis)

Soccer Focus

Core training has gone from being an afterthought to being a primary focus of training. More than just the abdominal muscles, the core includes every muscle that crosses the body's center—muscles that work together to accelerate and decelerate almost every activity in all sports. Power developed in the lower extremities can diminish as the energy passes up the movement chain, so developing the core helps transfer power to the extremities for performance. Because soccer has many abrupt changes in speed, direction, or both, a weak core could mean the trunk and upper limbs might react to changes in an uncontrolled manner, placing the lower limbs in a precarious position that could lead to injury. Awkward movements of the trunk have been reported to precede ACL injuries.



VARIATION

Captain's Crunch

Dozens of exercises are designed to strengthen the core. The soccer ball crunch can be performed on the field. A variation of this crunch focuses on the rectus abdominis and can be done in the weight room using a captain's chair. Support yourself on your forearms in the captain's chair, flex your knees, and lift your knees toward your chest.