

The Drawing-In Maneuver (DIM or DM)

The National Academy of Sports Medicine's definition of the DIM is simply "Activation of the transverse abdominis, multifidus, pelvic floor muscles and diaphragm to provide core stabilization."

What?

When you activate the deepest abdominal muscle, the transverse abdominis (TA), the other stabilizing muscles contract as well. They include the multifidus (deep spinal muscles), the pelvic floor muscles and the diaphragm. However, some individuals must be cued to activate the pelvic floor muscles to a greater degree. This is usually the most difficult.

So, what this means is, if you can focus on activating the TA, the other muscles will follow. In the following exercise, do not progress to the next step until you have successfully completed the previous one. This exercise will focus on activating the TA to initiate the DIM. (Sounds like corporate talk.)

Ask anyone that has trained with me, and they will tell you that any movement or exercise is more efficient if they utilize the DIM (Drawing-in Maneuver) before and during the movement or exercise. Time after time if I see them struggling to complete a movement, or even just as a reminder, I'll say, "Draw the abs in," or "Tighten the abs," or simply "Draw in." Why? Because all movement places force on the core, therefore the core is where movement begins. If the core is stabilized, movement is easier, more efficient, and risk of injury to the spine is greatly decreased.

Now I know that's a lot to absorb, but trust me---

If you're ready I'll take you through a very simple, but critical exercise for activating the core. Let me first say that like with any other exercise, there is a progression that can be followed with this exercise. However, the easiest posture to experience DIM in, is on all fours. That's right. Your hands and knees.

Please read the exercise in full, visualizing the instructions, before beginning.

Ready? Spine is straight, head is neutral. Let's begin.

1. Diaphragmatic or belly breathing results in a slight increase or extension in the abdomen area without (purposely) lifting the rib cage excessively, as you inhale, and a decrease in the abdomen area without (purposely) dropping the rib cage, as you exhale. So, take a deep breath utilizing belly breathing. Keep breathing this way and practice until you can do it successfully.
2. When done successfully, on your next exhale, draw the navel (in) away from your clothing or waistband, towards you spine. To do this successfully, there is no

(external) movement of the trunk, shoulders, head or spine. You should not be sucking in your "gut" or holding your breath.

3. When you've successfully completed Steps 1 & 2, you must now continue proper breathing while maintaining the DIM. In other words, BREATHE, but don't belly breathe or chest breathe. Don't be confused by this. Just do it. You'll feel the lower rib cage expanding first (instead of the belly), but still, without (purposeful) movement of the chest or spine.

Now here's the amazing part. This DIM is what you should be striving for every day during all activity, and especially resistance training! You can practice in a variety of positions. Here are a few examples:

- Sitting at your desk or in your car
- Standing at the sink or in line at a check-out
- Lying on your back while relaxing
- Lying on your side while doing whatever it is you do on your side
- Etc.

Get the picture? I want you to do this, because your life isn't based on one body position. Hey, and it works great for improved posture too! In other words:

DON'T let it all hang out!

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