
What does it mean to \"Engage\" muscles?

Posted by nursekelso - 2008/05/04 09:43

Hi all. Background I guess. I'm a young woman, 10-15 pounds overweight, fairly fit. I started P90X Lean yesterday. The first exercise is "Core Synergistics" which is supposedly your ab, chest, and back muscles. Well Tony kept saying to "Engage" and if I didn't engage I wouldn't get as much out of it. Well, I didn't engage because I don't understand what he means by engage. Today my abs don't hurt at all. My arms do, my hip joints do, and my back does a little bit. But not my abs at all - I'm pretty sure I did the entire Core Synergistics wrong. I mean, I did the exercises right, but I didn't "engage."

My friend says that means to tense whatever muscle is supposed to be engaged - ex, if I'm supposed to engage my abs, tense my ab muscles. Is that correct? What am I doing wrong? Thanks guys!

Re:What does it mean to \"Engage\" muscles?

Posted by Iskarp - 2008/05/04 18:11

Basically, engaging is tensing and concentrating on form which will 'use' the desired muscles. In Core, if you do not "engage" the core muscles, your form will be 'saggy' and you have more of a chance of injuring your back then you do of strengthening the core band.

Re:What does it mean to \"Engage\" muscles?

Posted by aaviles9 - 2008/05/11 05:41

Whenever you "engage" a muscle, you essentially are concentrating on the form and function of the muscle. Whenever you contract the muscle, you are engaging it. A lot of times people use momentum to perform exercises and this is not an effective way to engage the muscle. If you concentrate on the contraction and release of the muscle your technique improves. For example, bend your arm at the elbow, bringing your fist up towards your shoulder; now do the same movement, but slow it down and concentrate on the exercise, on both the contraction and the release of the muscle, thus "engaging" your bicep. It is the same movement, but the first is not a bicep curl. You should be able to feel the difference between the two movements, if you cannot, then you are not "engaging" your bicep. You should consciously be able to feel the muscle contracting and working as you perform the exercise. Hope this makes sense and helps.
