

# Sex Positions That Double as Exercise

No matter how much your partner pleads, you can't substitute time in the sack for time on the treadmill. However, certain sex positions do work a woman's muscle groups -- some so much, in fact, that you might not be able to make it to the gym the next day.

## Missionary

In a way, the missionary position is the physical equivalent of the old "I'm busy washing my hair" excuse -- it's the brush-off used when you're lazy, tired, or just not that interested. But despite being one of the most passive contortions for a woman, man-on-top can still provide a pretty good workout.

"It depends on how enthusiastic you are about it, but missionary can be great for the core muscles," says Stacy Berman, a New York City-based certified fitness trainer and founder of Stacy's Boot Camp. "If your partner is thrusting toward you, you want to have an equal and opposite thrust back, and that requires a lot of core strength. It actually will start burning."

Patti Britton, author of *The Art of Sex Coaching* and immediate past president of the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists, agrees that you'll definitely be feeling it in your abs. "You can strengthen your core by focusing on pelvic lifting using your core, not your lower back. That's where women tend to get stuck -- they tend to rely on their lower back to give them propulsion." (The risk of which isn't a joke, either. Worst-case scenario, you could throw out your back or sustain some other injury -- not exactly a bedroom turn-on.)

Missionary position can also provide a good butt workout. "The more she does buttock squeezes, the more she could accentuate her riding toward him to give herself a good glute workout," Britton says.



## Doggy-Style

Like with the missionary position, penetration-from-behind sex engages the woman's core because she has to stabilize herself on all fours, says Berman. You'll also be working your quadriceps and glutes to help brace yourself against the impact.

However, you can use a modified position to get a good arm workout, too. Rather than having your hands flat on the bed, "if the woman has her hands on a wall in front of her and sort of uses her upper body to help thrust, that would be a good shoulder and upper body workout," Berman says.



## Scissors

According to Britton, the scissors position is the least strenuous of all -- there's no suspending of body weight, and it generally makes for gentler and slower penetration (which would explain why it's often recommended for pregnant women). "Scissors is for when you're tired, not for being an acrobat in bed," she says. Still, that's not to say you won't still be engaging muscle groups.

With your legs intercrossed with your partner's, there's limited movement for both the man and women, so a lot of inner-thigh strength and core stabilization will be at work. "When you squeeze your inner thighs, the core will naturally contract as well," Berman explains.



## Cowgirl

With a standard cowgirl position, the lower part of the woman's legs are braced on the bed or floor, which will engage her butt and core.

"Much like riding a horse, she's going to flex her lower abs and pelvic muscles," says Yvonne K. Fulbright, a certified sex educator and author of *Touch Me There!* "Pressing into the man's abs and sides with her quads or calves can engage those muscles as well."

Modifying the cowgirl position can work additional muscle groups. "To make it even more intense, she can come up onto her feet, almost like a squat over him. That's all butt, legs, and hips," says Berman.

"If she gets up onto her feet and leans onto her hands, she'll also have to use her upper body to balance."



## Lotus

Like the missionary position, the lotus sitting position is one of the more passive sex positions. However, many of the same muscles worked in the cowgirl position are going to be used in this contortion: the core is engaged to stabilize the body, and the glutes are worked during thrusting.



# Lunges

Sure, you might hate doing lunges at the gym while your personal trainer named Cheetah is yelling at you to do "just five more," but you might not mind them so much in the bedroom.

Like the name suggests, the lunge position has the woman sitting on top of the man, with one leg planted in front of her and the other leg extended behind her in between the man's legs. This move is good for the quad, front of the leg, hamstring, core, and butt, says Berman. "It'll also work the deep stabilizer muscle of the leg in the front -- both inner and outer thigh -- as well as stretch the back leg's hip flexor," she says. "That's great because most people sit at desk all day, and this way you can stretch it out."



## Standing

Standing is one of the more challenging positions because often the woman has to allow her partner to lift her in some way, says Britton.

If the man and woman are facing each other, core and upper-leg strength comes into play: if she's standing on one leg, those leg muscles are worked to keep her upright, and core muscles are engaged to keep her balanced. If she's wrapping both legs around her partner, she'll need good arm strength to hold onto her partner. And regardless which one of these contortions she's in, "she has to have stamina if she's standing," says Britton.

If the man and woman are facing the same direction, the same muscles engaged in doggy-style are used: she'll work her core for balance, and her arms can be worked if she's bracing herself against a wall or headboard and using them to help thrust.



## Bridge

With the bridge, the woman is facing upward, using all four limbs to hold her body weight off the bed. All our sex experts agree: this pose is not for the weak. Or, as Britton puts it: "Oh, God, she better be yoga-ing five days a week or training as a gymnast."

"This is a highly advanced position," Britton says. "She needs to stabilize herself so as he's thrusting in and out, she doesn't crash."

Even if you pile a tower of pillows under your back to help support your weight (which Britton recommends), you'll still definitely be working your buttocks and inner-thigh muscles, says Fulbright. "This is going to work all of it -- her biceps, triceps, abs, glutes, quads, calves. Unless she's really strong, she shouldn't expect to hold this position for long."

Adds Berman, "If you're going from cowgirl to this position, your butt will start burning after five minutes."



## Arch

The arch is a modified bridge pose, with a woman resting on her shoulders while using her legs to hold her lower body off the bed.

"In many ways, she's using the same muscle groups as for the bridge, only working them harder because she's using less to hold herself up," says Fulbright. Your core muscles, glutes, and thighs are all worked in the arch. However, Britton considers this a much safer position than the bridge: "There's no strain on the neck or shoulder region, which can seize up."



## **Your Better-Sex Workout:**

### **Why Try It?**

- One study revealed that 88 percent of women who exercised five times per week rated themselves as way above average between the sheets.
- By working on all the right muscles, you will boost your energy level, build core strength, and become more flexible, according to Damon Roxas, national director of training and fitness for Crunch Fitness, who created this workout.

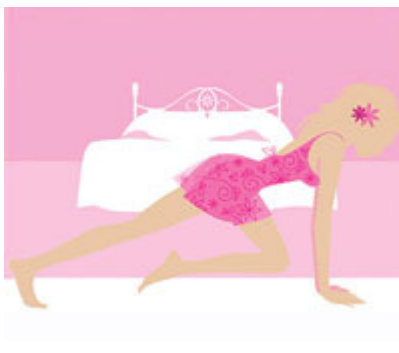
**What you'll need:** A mat and a sturdy chair

## Improve Energy

**Try:** Mountain Climber with Reverse Crunch

**Targets:** Abs, hip flexors, glutes, quads, and calves

- Start in full push-up position.
- Pull right knee toward chest, return to start, then switch legs, keeping abs tight.
- Continue quickly alternating sides for 30 seconds.



- Lie faceup on floor with legs extended, hands behind head, feet lifted 6 inches.
- Lift hips, bringing knees toward chest while crunching upper body toward knees. Lower.
- Do 10 to 15 reps. Repeat sequence 5 times.



**Why it works:** This move increases stamina. "Most of us are so exhausted that we find ourselves choosing between sleep and sex on a regular basis," says Laura Berman, PhD, author of *The Passion Prescription: 10 Weeks to Your Best Sex Ever*. With more energy, guess what choice you'll make.

## Build Core Strength

**Try:** Corkscrew

**Targets:** Abs, obliques, and glutes

- Lie faceup on floor, legs together and extended above hips.
- Slowly lift hips slightly off floor while twisting lower body to right, keeping upper body still. Return to center, lower hips, then repeat to left.
- Do 20 twists, alternating sides. Lower legs.



**Why it works:** "Core moves help control the all-important pelvic muscles you use during sex," says Berman.

## **Gain Flexibility**

**Try:** Hip flexor/quad stretch

**Targets:** Hips and quads

- Start on all fours, hands in line with shoulders, knees under hips.
- Step left foot forward between hands, knee bent 90 degrees; lift upper body.
- Keeping chest up, push right hip/quad forward. Grasp right foot with right hand and pull toward butt. Hold for 30 seconds.
- Switch sides; repeat.



**Why it works:** Stretching poses can help you get into some, um, creative positions, says Berman.

## "O" Insurance

**Try:** Bridge pose

**Targets:** Abs, hip flexors, pelvic floor, glutes, and hamstrings

- Lie faceup on floor, knees bent.
- Squeeze glutes and engage abs and pelvic muscles. Lift hips, forming a diagonal line from knees to head. Lower; don't let butt touch floor. Do 15 reps.
- Next, exhale to tilt pelvis forward, keeping lower back on floor (not shown). Inhale to lower. Do 15 reps.



**Why it works:** "The stronger your pelvic-floor muscles are, the stronger your contractions and the better your orgasms will be," says Berman.

## Heighten Sensation Down There

**Try:** Single-leg dip/jumping jack

**Targets:** Glutes, hamstrings, and quads

- Stand in front of chair with feet hip-width apart.
- Step up on seat with right foot, left foot hanging off. Bend right knee 90 degrees, keeping left foot hanging. Hold for 15 seconds. Step down. Switch legs; repeat.
- Do 10 jumping jacks.
- Repeat sequence 5 times, resting for 1 minute in between.



**Why it works:** "Squats, lunges, and other lower-body exercises help get your blood flowing to all the right spots," explains Berman.