

Sex Positions That Double as Exercise



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.



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.



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.





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.



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."



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."

Originally published on FitnessMagazine.com, February 2009.

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