

DR GORDY'S FAVORITE EXERCISE FOR A STRONG BACK AND AN ATTRACTIVE BELLY

Lie on your back. Stretch both arms out to the side, palms down. Raise your legs until they are perpendicular to the floor, knees slightly bent, knees and feet together. Keeping legs together, rotate your hips to the left slowly, lowering your feet almost to the floor, pressing down with your left palm and forearm to slow the rotation. Slowly bring legs back up to vertical above your body. With legs together, rotate hips to the right until your right foot almost touches the floor, pressing down with your right palm and forearm to slow hip rotation. Raise your legs back to vertical. Repeat until tired.

Take a break

Get two dumbbells, about 35 pounds each or more. Lie down on your back with your arms outstretched, palms up, holding dumbbells. Raise your legs until they are perpendicular to the floor, knees slightly bent, knees and feet together. Keeping legs together, rotate your hips to the left slowly, lowering your feet almost to the floor, pressing up against the right dumbbell and tensioning across your chest to slow the rotation. Slowly bring legs back up to vertical above your body. With legs together, rotate hips to the right until your right foot almost touches the floor, pressing up against the left dumbbell and tensioning across your chest to slow hip rotation. Slowly raise your legs back to vertical. Repeat until tired.

In boot camp in 1968, this was called the "drill sergeant's special" and was used for torture. It was done only with empty hands, palms down, pressing against the ground. I noticed it made my back feel better, and have used it ever since. I added the dumbbell variation to that exercise in order to work the other side of the core muscles, in particular the abdominal obliques, to control belly sag and get spinal support from the abdominal musculature, in addition to the spinal support from all the back muscles that is strengthened by the empty-hands palms-down version.