

Why does my back hurt after using the Incline Situp Bench?

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This post is a follow on from my previous Mini-Post – [Why does my back hurt after Burpees?](#)



Almost every gym in the world has an incline situp bench.

The goal of the machine/exercise is to increase the load on your core when performing situps.

Unfortunately, this exercise can cause as much harm as good if the user doesn't know the correct technique whilst performing the situp or if they don't have the core strength to perform this exercise correctly.

From an earlier post ([Hip Flexion v's Lumbar Flexion](#)), I described how there is a major difference between lumbar flexion and hip flexion.

The incline situp which was intended to load your lumbar flexion muscles, ends up emphasising your hip flexion muscles at the detriment of your lumbar spine. Let me explain...

As per a previous blog article ([Why can't I sit up when performing situps?](#)), I outlined how the hip flexor muscles can become the prime mover of a situp action if the feet are anchored (allowing the hip flexors to perform a "reverse hip flexion") - not lifting the legs but lifting the upper body.

With an incline situp – the capacity of the core to sit the body up is even less than when on the floor so the only way of sitting up is to strongly activate the hip flexors to assist in pulling the upper body up to a full hip flexion position.

If the person undertaking this activity has very strong core muscles, they might be able to maintain a neutral pelvis during this activity and will therefore be training their hip flexors isotonicly and core isometrically (a good outcome) **BUT** the vast majority of gym goers who perform this exercise do not have this level of core strength and so rely almost solely on the hip flexors doing the situp work causing anterior pelvic tilting and high load/shearing forces on the lower back.



It is not uncommon to see people sitting up with limited lumbar flexion which means that their hip flexors are doing the vast majority of work.

In fact, as shown in this image, this client is leaning backwards whilst they situp – this is a clear indication that their abdominal musculature is doing almost none of the work and their hip flexors (attached to the lumbar spine) are pulling the upper body to a full situp position at the detriment of the hip flexor attachments on the lumbar spine and lumbar vertebral joints.

Review my [Youtube clip](#) on the subject for more details.

IN SUMMARY:

Performing an Incline situp is an **ADVANCED CORE exercise.**

They should only be performed once you have developed a strong core through more introductory core exercise routines and only after you are capable of creating a strong abdominal brace through well conditioned oblique and transversus abdominis muscle groups.

If you are going to attempt this exercise, you should focus on curling your lumbar spine throughout the exercise with a focus on lumbar flexion, not hip flexion.

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