

Dead bug is a bodyweight exercise, ideal for those looking to build strength and control. It can be completed without any extra equipment, making it the perfect addition to any strength-based routine.

This article discusses the dead bug exercise, how to perform it with perfect form, and some of the variations to get the most out of the exercise. Keep reading to learn more.

What Is A Dead Bug Exercise?

Dead bug is a type of core-strengthening exercise that targets the abdominal muscles. You may have been prescribed these exercises to help with back pain, or alongside more advanced back pain therapies. The exercise can be performed without any equipment – just your body weight. It involves lying on your back, raising and lowering opposite arms and legs while keeping your abdominal muscles engaged. **As the position resembles a bug on its back, the exercise has been aptly named “dead bug”.**

When Is Dead Bug Used?

Dead bug is commonly prescribed by physiotherapists and chiropractors to target areas of weakness or dysfunction. This can include for those recovering from injury, for general strength and conditioning, or for athletes in certain sports, such as cycling. Dead bug may also be used by clinicians as a low-force alternative to crunches or planks, for example in a clinical Pilates class.

How To Perform The Dead Bug Exercise

Although it appears simple, dead bug is actually a complex exercise. **It requires deep concentration and steady engagement of multiple muscle groups at the same time, including the core, arms, and legs.** It can be helpful to complete the exercise under the supervision of a physiotherapist when starting out to ensure the right technique:

1. Start by lying down on your back (in supine) on an exercise or yoga mat with your knees bent

2. Keeping the natural curvature of your spine, lift both legs up into a table top position (knees and hips bent at 90 degrees)
3. Raise your arms so they are both pointing straight towards the ceiling
4. Maintaining a neutral spine, extend your right leg forwards whilst simultaneously raising your left arm overhead in a controlled manner
5. Return your arm and leg to the starting position, then switch to repeat the movement on the opposite side

It's important to keep your spine in a supported position throughout the exercise, and remember to keep breathing! This exercise should not cause any pain.

Common Mistakes When Performing Dead Bug

When it comes to the dead bug exercise, less is more! There are a few common mistakes people make when performing this exercise:

Forgetting to breathe: Even though dead bug is challenging to perform, it's important not to forget to breathe. The breath can actually facilitate the movement throughout the exercise, enhancing muscle control and activation.

Over- or under-arching the back: Some people make the mistake of flattening or overextending the natural curvature of the lower spine during the exercise, which prevents the target muscles from activating properly and can lead to pain or discomfort.

Poor movement patterns: The wrong movement pattern, whether from rushing or a poor understanding of the exercise, can make the exercise ineffective, or can even lead to injury.

As a result, it's always a good idea to get advice from a health professional, such as a physiotherapist, before starting dead bug to avoid these common mistakes.

Precautions For The Dead Bug Exercise

Whilst dead bug is a popular exercise, it may not be suitable for everyone. For a small group of people, such as those recovering from an accident or surgery, dead bug should

be avoided. Additionally, a different exercise may be more suitable in some situations, such as during or after pregnancy.

If you have any doubts or concerns, speak to a physiotherapist or doctor prior to adding any new exercises in your workout routine.

Prosthetic limb type(s): Transfemoral (above knee); Transtibial (below knee)