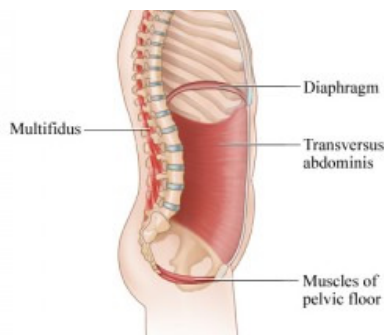


Strong to the Core



Where is the Core?

The core is more than just your abs and back – it also includes the diaphragm, pelvic floor, transverse abdominis, and multifidus. Strengthening the core stabilizes the muscles of the hips and lower back which hold your joints together properly to improve movement efficiency, prevent injury, and promote stability.

Benefits for a Strong Core

- ✓ **Real-life benefits:** A strong core supports good posture and proper joint alignment and prevents back pain. A strong core allows you to stand for long periods of time without pain or survive sitting at your desk and working at your computer for long hours.
- ✓ **Injury prevention:** Good posture places the least amount of stress on your joints. Strong stabilizers keep your neck, shoulders, hips, and knees properly aligned to minimize wear and tear on your body. Strong stabilizers also let you use the strength in your arms and legs.
- ✓ **Confidence Boost:** Nothing boosts your confidence like great posture and moving from the center of your being. It not only makes you look and feel better, but you'll have more energy throughout the day and perform daily activities with more ease.

Exercises for the Core

Instructions: Start with two sets of 15 reps; add more sets when strength and time permit. Exercises can be used with or without the ball.

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| | <p>Squats With a Stability Ball - Rest a ball between your back and a wall; squat until your knees are bent 90 degrees. Hold for 20-30 seconds and repeat.</p> |
| | <p>Push-Ups With Ball - Rest your knees, shins, or toes on a ball. Wrists, elbows and shoulders are inline. While keeping your back flat, lower your chest to the floor and return to start position.</p> |
| | <p>Plank - Elbows under shoulders, abs tight, rest on toes. Hold this position for 10 seconds to start. Over time work up to 30, 45 or 60 seconds.</p> |
| | <p>Sit-Ups on the Ball - Feet flat on the floor, neck relaxed, hands gently supporting your head without straining your neck. Raise your head and shoulders off the ball while keeping your elbows open. Hold for three deep breaths, return to start position and repeat.</p> |
| | <p>Back Extensions - Rest your torso on the ball and put toes on floor. Hands behind your neck, lean forward, then straighten your back.</p> |

Resources: <http://www.runnersworld.com/>, <http://health.howstuffworks.com/>