



# Build Core Strength

## CHALLENGE

Exercise to strengthen your core

### Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Build Core Strength.”
2. Create your own plan to build core strength.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



When Sue Sanders woke up in the morning her back hurt. And she'd groan getting out of bed.

“I was pretty much a couch potato,” says Sue. “My back hurt all the time, and I didn't have any energy. Even little things like tying my shoes were hard.”

She chalked it up to having kids and gaining weight. But there were other lifestyle factors at play.

She spent most of the day sitting at work. She watched a lot of TV after work. Her diet included a lot of high-calorie foods and drinks. And she wasn't active.

But then something happened...

She changed her diet by eating fewer calories and healthier foods. She started drinking more water instead of soda. And she started exercising.

### Core Strength Quiz

How much do you know about the benefits of core strength? Take this quiz to find out.



#### Y N

1.   You can strengthen your core with just 10 minutes of exercise a day.
2.   When you are physically active, good core strength can help prevent injuries.
3.   You don't really need core strength to do simple things like put on your shoes, turn to look right or left, bathe, or sit in a chair.
4.   Studies show that improving core strength can often help reduce lower back pain.
5.   You can make your balance and stability better by developing core strength.

How did you do? Your core muscles include your abs and all the other muscles that help stabilize your spine. Research shows developing core strength improves balance, mobility, and posture, and lowers your risk for injuries.<sup>1</sup>

Answers: 1. True. 2. True. 3. False. 4. True. 5. True.

When her personal trainer said building core strength could help reduce back pain, she was determined. At first she could barely hold a plank for a few seconds.

But she kept going. Within a year, she lost about 100 pounds. And her core strength improved. Her personal best for a plank...3 minutes!

“I have so much more energy now,” says Sue. “I feel better, and I can actually get out and do stuff like hike, walk, or work in the yard.”

How to build a better core  
<https://tinyurl.com/3h9asey9>

Fun fact...Strong core muscles improve balance, stability, and make everyday living easier. Ready to build a stronger core? Take the month-long challenge to Build Core Strength.

## 4 Easy Ways to Build Core Strength

Wondering how to build core strength? FYI...Sit-ups aren't on the list. Here are 4 easy ways to build core strength:

### 1. Breathe

- Take a deep breath. Go ahead, suck it in.
- Hold your breath. Count to 10.
- Repeat.



This is a simple exercise you can perform to improve core strength anytime.

### 2. Replace Your Chair...

- *With a stability ball.* Use a stability ball instead of the typical office chair.
- Why? Sitting on a chair can weaken your core muscles. Using a stability ball forces your core muscles to work harder.



### 3. Straighten Up

- Sit up straight. Walk tall.
- When you keep your spine straight and in alignment, you're using core muscles.



### 4. Do Core-Strength Exercises

Developing core strength is a lot easier than you might think.

Give this core-strength workout a try (<https://tinyurl.com/y258nyzj>).

It only takes a few minutes:

- Plank
- Dead Bug
- Pointing Dog
- Back Extension
- Good Morning
- Reverse Crunch
- Superman
- Russian Twist
- Windshield Wipers



Plank



Pointing Dog

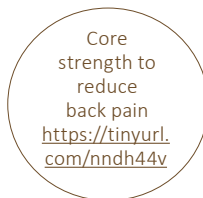


Back Extension

**Build core strength anytime...**Add a few core strength exercises to your gym workout. Or do them while watching TV. It won't take long for your core muscles to get stronger.

Core strength can have a big impact on your overall health and quality of life. Make the effort to strengthen your core every day.

You'll have better strength, balance, and stability. You'll lower your risk for injuries. You'll feel better too.



## 5 Surprising Reasons Core Strength Matters



Strengthen your core. You've heard the advice before from a friend, at the gym, in a magazine, or online.

But what does it really mean? Core strength is sometimes misunderstood as a code word for six-pack abs.

But it's a lot more than that. Some surprising benefits of core strength include:

**1. Keep your back happy.** Exercises like curl-ups, leg raises, planks, and push-ups improve core strength and help reduce neck and back pain.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Protect the lines of communication.** Your brain and spinal cord control the central nervous system. Strong core muscles help stabilize the spine. They also help protect the spinal cord used to help the brain and body communicate.<sup>3</sup>

**3. Be steady and strong.** What if you did a few simple core-strength exercises a day for 4 weeks? One recent study found that just 15 minutes a day improved strength and balance.<sup>4</sup>

**4. Prevent injuries.** "I have fallen, and I can't get up." You don't want to be that person, right? Research shows developing core strength helps prevent injuries, muscle strains and spasms.<sup>5</sup> It also helps reduce hip and knee strain.

**5. Improve posture.** Sitting for long periods can lead to poor posture. But it doesn't have to. Just 20 minutes of core strength moves 3 times a week can help.<sup>6</sup>

## References

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3. Abdelraouf, O., et al. (2020). Effects of core stability exercise combined with virtual reality in collegiate athletes with nonspecific low back pain: a randomized clinical trial. *Bulletin of Faculty of Physical Therapy*, 25:7. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yhkww5dy>
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5. Harvard University. (2019). Why you should care about your core. Harvard Health Publishing. From: <https://tinyurl.com/fcm4bes>
6. Kim, D., et al. (2015). Effect of an exercise program for posture correction on musculoskeletal pain. *Journal of Physical Therapy Science*, 27(6): 1791-1794. From: <https://tinyurl.com/3y3rwrw3>



# Build Core Strength

## CHALLENGE

Exercise to strengthen your core

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Take action to build core strength a few minutes a day.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to build core strength and make it a regular part of your life.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I did core-strength exercises  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_