



Core exercises: Why you should strengthen your core muscles

By Mayo Clinic staff

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You know core exercises are good for you — but do you include core exercises in your fitness routine? Here's why you should.

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Core exercises are an important part of a well-rounded fitness program. Aside from occasional sit-ups and push-ups, however, core exercises are often neglected. Still, it pays to get your core muscles — the muscles around your trunk and pelvis — in better shape. Read on to find out why.

Core exercises improve your balance and stability

Core exercises train the muscles in your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen to work in harmony. This leads to better balance and stability, whether on the playing field or in daily activities. In fact, most sports and other physical activities depend on stable core muscles.

Core exercises don't require specialized equipment or a gym membership

Any exercise that involves the use of your abdominal and back muscles in coordinated fashion counts as a core exercise. A bridge is a classic core exercise. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Avoid tilting your hips. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise your hips off the floor until your hips are aligned with your knees and shoulders. Hold the position for as long as you can without breaking your form.

Core exercises can help tone your abs

Want more-defined abdominal muscles? Core exercises are important. Although it takes aerobic activity to burn abdominal fat, core exercises can strengthen and tone the underlying muscles.

Strong core muscles make it easier to do most physical activities

Strong core muscles make it easier to do everything from swinging a golf club to getting a glass from the top shelf or bending down to tie your shoes. Weak core muscles leave you susceptible to poor posture, lower back pain and muscle injuries.

Core exercises can help you reach your fitness goals

Aerobic exercise and muscular fitness are the primary elements of most fitness programs. But to have a truly well-rounded fitness program, you should include core exercises in the mix as well. Whether you're a novice taking the first steps toward fitness or a committed fitness fanatic hoping to optimize your results, a well-rounded fitness program is the best way to reach your fitness goals.

References

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