

Get More With a Stronger Core

By Maurice Brown (ACE Advanced Health and Fitness Specialist)

The benefits of strengthening the core have been highly touted for many years. Yet weak core muscles are still highly prevalent in our society. Even among athletes the core is often insufficiently conditioned. Therefore I felt this subject was worth re-visiting.

Core muscles are those found between the top of the legs and the chest line and consist of the obliques, abdominals, lower back, and the glutes. These four areas of the body are the ones that usually frame the posture of a person. Hence, a good posture reflects the good condition of these muscle areas.

A strong core also makes everything you do easier. What people don't realize is that your core muscles are actually the center of your bodies strength. Having a strong core will make you more physically powerful, it will maintain equilibrium and stability for exercising and all other physical activity.

For these reasons health and fitness experts have realized that it is important to strengthen the core. Through research it has been learned that having a stronger core can lessen a lot of health problems concerning posture.

For instance, a well-conditioned core can will result in better posture as it supports the upper torso.

Other benefits of a strong core include:

1. Improved posture and muscular back pain prevention.

This means that as you incorporate abdominal and back exercises into your exercise routine, and do stretching to improve flexibility, you will gain more strength and a more upright posture.

2. Helps avoid back injury.

Exercising your core will strengthen and tone your lower back muscles and buttocks while stretching the hip flexors and the muscles on the front of the thighs.

Injury to the lower back is most often caused by weakness in the musculature, so strengthening those muscles decreases the chance of injury.

3. Improves physical performance

Exercising the core muscles with slow, static stretching is effective in relieving stiffness and enhances flexibility. Practically all physical activity involves using these muscles and so it follows that a strong core will make everything you do easier.

4. Improves balance

Core muscle exercises and stretching as part of an exercise program will help greatly in maintaining balance and physical independence in your senior years. 15 to 20 minutes of core exercises, 2-3 times per week is all it takes.

Core Training for the athlete

The core is more than just the physical center of the body. Its strength actually dictates athleticism. The core is an intricate system of musculature of the trunk. An athlete with a solid, strong core displays balance, agility, proprioceptive awareness, strength, power, and endurance—all are imperative to raising any sport specific skill to a high level.

For example, a baseball player uses a well trained core to transfer power from the legs to the upper body to swing the bat. A sprinter transfers power from the arms to the legs through the core. A swimmer uses it to make a smooth turn at the end of a lane.

Just about every sport relies on a strong and stable core. So whether your goals are to increase health and fitness or improve athleticism, a strong core is essential.

The specific core exercises which should be done vary per individual depending upon goals and current abilities. Below are links to information on two common exercises which help build a decent strength base within the core.

Exercise Ball Crunch

http://exercise.about.com/od/abs/ss/abexercises_3.htm

Stability Ball Bird dog

<http://www.diet.com/exercise/bird-dog-on-exercise-ball>

For development of your own personalized core conditioning program, contact me for a free consultation today.

