

CORE TRAINING

Why complete core muscle training?

The core is comprised of much more than just the stomach muscles. The core includes the abdominal muscles, obliques, hip flexors, and lower back muscles. These muscles work together to provide balance and stability, as well as help with the transfer of power from the lower body to the upper body and vice versa. A strong core will improve posture whereas a weak core can contribute to low back problems. A lot of our movements are powered by the core; from jogging to swinging a baseball bat.

Here is a quick test: if you find yourself leaning forward (rounding your shoulders) while in a sitting or standing position, you probably have weak core muscles.

Benefits of core training:

1. Increased performance with daily life activities
2. Improved balance and stability
3. Move more efficiently
4. Reduced risk of injury
5. Better performance in sports and lifetime activities

Safety

1. Do not hold your breath; make sure to breathe while performing the exercises.
2. Do not use momentum to complete the exercises. Go slow.
3. The quality of the movement is more important than quantity.

The abdominal crunch is a popular exercise. Below are some common errors that occur when performing this exercise.

1. Not squeezing the abs at the top of the crunch. If you can talk while doing this exercise you are not squeezing hard enough.
2. Jerking on the back of the head. Do not pull your head while performing the abdominal crunch exercise. Cross your arms in front of your chest if you feel yourself pulling your head.
3. Interlocking your fingers behind your head limits the motion of your abs. It is better to keep your hands off of your head.

How long should a core routine last?

First, complete a total body warm-up for 3-5 minutes before beginning the core exercises. The cobra yoga position can be used to stretch your stomach muscles and the cat/cow yoga position can be used to stretch your lower back. A core routine can last from 5 – 30 minutes. The chart below is a guide for varying levels of fitness with the number of exercises and accompanying repetitions.

Fitness Level	Number of Exercises	Time to Complete
Beginner	5-10	8-10
Intermediate	15	15
Advanced	20	20
Elite	25-35	20-30

How do I create a core routine?

Make sure to familiarize yourself with each of the core exercises. Perform each exercise by itself before combining the exercises into a routine. This will help you to avoid injury and to get the most out of the core workouts

To begin, select five exercises. Arrange the exercises from 1 to 5. Start with the 1st exercise and go through to the 5th exercise and then go backwards from 5 to exercise 1. Start by performing one repetition of each exercise then progress to 5, 10, 15, etc. Remember to go slow when performing each exercise.

Here are two core routines to try:

- Beginning Core routine
- Intermediate Core routine