



Written by, Beth Parry, PTA

Why is core strength important?

Core strengthening seems to be a popular new catch phrase. Everywhere you look, you see articles and advertisements for the core. There are many classes that focus on core stability including yoga and Pilates. But is core strengthening just a phase like the “thigh master” or is it really important part of our overall health?

What is your Core?

There is not one universal definition of “core.” However the core is made up of multiple muscles, including your Transverse Abdominis, diaphragm, Internal and external oblique’s, rectus abdominis , pelvic floor, and your multifidi’s to name a few. If those words seem foreign to you, basically, the core is made up of muscles ranging from your back all the way around to your abdominal muscles. There are multiple layers of muscles that all play a key role in your day to day functions.

Your core acts like a girdle, or a pair of built in “spanx.” The core places compression on your inner abdominal cavity keeping your organs safe, it supports your spine, improves your posture, and promotes better balance.

How do I know if my core is weak?

Are you currently or have you ever been overweight? Have you been pregnant? Do you have difficulties maintaining your balance? Do you go straight to the cardio equipment at the gym? Do you sit at a computer all day? Is a BOSU or a therapeutic stability ball not in your vocabulary? Do you consider sit-ups your core exercise of choice? Then yes, you more than likely you have a core weakness. Some definitive signs that you may have a core weakness include low back pain, urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, balance difficulties or falls. But do not fear, core strength is not scary, nor does it take a lot of equipment or sweat to strengthen. There are many things you

can do to strengthen your core while sitting in the car, sitting at your computer, or making dinner.

Is there anything I can do at home?

There are many things you can do to strengthen your core at home. You can start by being more mindful of your posture, sitting up straighter, not slumped over. Practice pulling your belly button back towards your spine while walking or sitting at your computer. There are great exercises to incorporate into your day, including pelvic tilts and bridging. Kegel exercises are also a great way to work on your pelvic floor and your core. There are many ways to develop a core program and ways of progressing to more challenging exercises depending on your goals. Just remember, core exercises, if done incorrectly, can cause increased low back pain or cause injury, so be sure to seek out a Licensed or certified professional to guide you through your journey.

What can I do to start my core strengthening program?

First and foremost, before starting any exercise regimen, it is important to check with your medical professional. There are many exercise classes that focus on core including Pilates and Yoga. These are great classes to take, however look for the beginner's class and make sure that your instructor corrects your body mechanics and shows many modifications for the exercises to meet your individual need.

If you are struggling with low back pain, balance difficulties, functional movement difficulties or urinary incontinence, Physical therapy would be a great fit for you. Utilize the direct access plan which allows you to schedule an evaluation without a prior script from your medical doctor. You can just call direct and get scheduled immediately. This will allow you to start your core program safely and efficiently.

