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**Strong To The Core of Your Being – The Benefits Of Core Training**

**By Nick Nilsson**

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If you were to ask me which muscle group in your entire body you could work to get the greatest benefits in the shortest amount of time, I would tell you without hesitation, "the core." Strengthening the core can realize tremendous benefits to anyone regardless of his or her training experience and can do so very quickly.

But what is the core?

The core, as it's known in strength training circles, consists of all the muscles in your abdominal and lower back areas. This includes all the abdominal muscles (rectus abdominus, internal and external obliques, transverse abdominus and intercostals) as well as the muscles associated with the spine (the erector spinae group) and the hip flexors (iliacus and psoas, collectively known as the iliopsoas).

These muscles all work in harmony to provide stabilization for your body and to transfer power from the legs to the upper body and vice versa. The core muscles also function to keep your insides in, where they belong!

And why is strengthening the core so important?

Weak core muscles contribute to all kinds of problems in the body, the most prevalent of which is lower back pain. By strengthening the muscles that help support the spine and improve posture, you can dramatically decrease the symptoms of lower back pain.

Picture your spine as a column of soda cans stacked one on top of the other. If you wanted to keep that column standing up under stress, what do you think would work better: a "tenser" bandage (as is used for wrapping injured ankles) or Scotch tape? Sure the tape would keep the cans together but the cans wouldn't receive a whole lot support, would they?

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When you strengthen the muscles of the core, you are in effect turning that Scotch tape into a nice, tight "tenser" bandage, increasing the amount of support that your spine gets.

Core training also has the potential to greatly improve sports performance. Watch a baseball pitcher throw a pitch in slow motion. The power of the throw starts at the legs, gets transferred through the abdominal area (a.k.a. the core) then ends up in the arm where the ball is released. Imagine how much speed and power would be lost from that throw if the core muscles couldn't efficiently transfer the force from the legs to the throwing arm.

The core is the one area of the body that will always give you a great return on your investment.

So how do I train my core muscles?

Exercises that work the abdominals and the lower back are the staples of core training. Also,

exercises that target the stabilization and power-transfer duties of the core muscles are very effective.

The most basic abdominal training exercise is the standard crunch. You can go to the following URL to see the proper technique for this exercise:

But I've got an exercise for you that blows the standard crunch right out of the water. The equipment required for this exercise: one rolled-up towel.

The exercise is known as the Abdominal Sit-Up. It uses a sit-up-like movement but focuses directly on the abdominal muscles rather than the hip flexors (which a regular sit-up does). It is also very safe for your lower back. Another advantage it has over the standard crunch is that it targets the stretched (arched back) range of motion of the abs, which is totally missed in standard floor crunch.

How To Do It:

Lie on your back on the floor. Roll up a towel or mat and slip it underneath your lower back, just above the waistband (the size of the towel affects your body position during this movement – use a fairly large towel).

Your knees should be bent about 90 degrees. Keep your feet close together and knees fairly wide apart. This prevents the hip flexors from having a direct line of pull, helping to minimize their involvement.

Do not anchor your feet or have someone hold them down. This automatically activates the hip flexors. You will get the most out of this exercise by minimizing their involvement.

The difficulty of this exercise depends on where you hold your hands. The hardest position is above your head at arms-length, then beside your head, then across your chest, then straight down between your legs or at your sides. Start with the easiest first then progress to the other positions as you get stronger.

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You are now ready to begin.

Keeping your torso straight and stiff, start the sit-up by tightening your lower abs then lifting your upper body off the floor.

As you continue up, imagine trying to push your face up against the ceiling (think up, not around).

When you reach about 25 to 30 degrees above horizontal, hold there for a second or two and squeeze your abs hard.

Keep your lower back in contact with the towel at all times and always maintain tension in the abs.

Lower yourself down slowly and under control. Do not just drop back to the ground. The negative portion of this exercise is extremely effective.

Remember to adjust your arm position depending on the strength of your abs (see above).

You can see pictures of how this exercise is done by going to:

### Incline Ab Sit-Ups

If you are a beginning trainer, this is a good starting variation of the Abdominal Sit-up.

Set an incline sit-up board to a slight incline. If you don't have an incline sit-up board, you can use an adjustable incline bench, a decline bench, a Step platform with a riser under one of the ends or a flat bench with something under one end. You can even use a propped-up 2 x 6 board!

Your head should be on the higher end with your feet placed on the floor.

The execution is exactly the same. The only difference is that the tension on the abs is much less due to the greatly improved leverage in this position, allowing even people feel that their abs aren't strong enough to do the exercise.

### Lying Superman Raises – An Exercise For The Lower Back

Though this exercise has a rather unique name, it is an excellent strengthening exercise for the lower back that you can do almost anywhere.

#### How To Do It:

Lie face down on the floor with your arms stretched out directly overhead (like Superman flying, hence the name).

Raise your left arm and right leg into the air at the same time, also raising your chest slightly off the floor. Hold there for a second and squeeze the muscles of your lower back. Lower your limbs back to

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the ground then raise your right arm and left leg and hold for a second.

You can push down with the hand that is on the ground to help raise your other arm and chest higher off the ground.

This exercise, even though it only uses your limbs as resistance, provides an excellent way to strengthen the lower back muscles.

Conclusion:

These two exercises will give you a good place to start with core training. You can begin improving your core strength by doing these exercises 3 times a week for 2 to 3 sets each.

Make core training a priority in your exercise routine and you will rapidly reap the benefits of having a stronger, more injury-proof midsection and back.

If you have any questions about core training or the exercises described here, go to:

Nick Nilsson is Vice President of BetterU, Inc., an online exercise, fitness, and personal training company. Check out his latest eBook "The Best Exercises You've Never Heard Of" at

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### **The Core: Movie Review**

**By C. Bailey-Lloyd/LadyCamelot**

#### **The Core: Movie Review by C. Bailey-Lloyd/LadyCamelot**

Ready for high-energy, heart-pumping drama? The Core , starring Aaron Eckhart as Josh Keyes, spins viewers into a nail-biting, edge-of-the-seat theoretical scheme of unimaginable catastrophic events!

If you're aware of the recent Ring of Fire Tsunami, then this spine-chilling movie will have you questioning whether our electromagnetic field is in working order.

In line with earth changes, The Core is a dynamic theatrical experience that combines heart-pulsing graphics and impromptu version of The Day after Tomorrow meets Bruce Willis' Armageddon.

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The Core is a remarkable film that integrates incredible imagery with broad intelligence. Enlightening, The Core will hurl you into the center of the Earth and just when you think everything is in the clear, the thrill-ride is just about to begin!

Written by Cooper Layne & John Rogers, directed by Jon Amiel and brought to you by Paramount Pictures, The Core is a prophetic depiction of modern-day earth changes and humanity's restoration of hope. See a Preview of The Core: [www.thecoremovie.com](http://www.thecoremovie.com)

The Core is rated PG-13 and is available on DVD and VHS. An invigorating film, I rate this movie 4 stars.

\*See this and other articles like this one at [HolisticJunction.com](http://HolisticJunction.com) today!

The Core: Movie Review

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