

Want to Do Everything Better ? Build A Strong Core

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By Dianne Villano

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Core strength and stability is increasingly recognized as a vital part of fitness. So what is it and how do you go about getting it? The past five years have seen growing interest in resistance, or weight training programs, aimed at achieving core strength and stability. While some of us might think apples when we hear the word 'core', the word certainly doesn't refer to a throw-away aspect of fitness.

What is core strength? The muscles of the 'core' are primarily those of the trunk and pelvis. The core muscles stabilize the spine and effectively move the body with varying loads. If the trunk muscles are weakened, then posture and movement can be affected significantly. The core muscles are necessary for effective transfer of energy from large to small muscle groups – especially when performing sports-specific movements. In recent years there has been a shift to an emphasis on 'functional' training, i.e. making training as realistic as possible so it has direct applicability to a particular sport. This type of training attempts to anticipate and mimic movements that occur during sport, such as twisting and turning. It is believed that training for core strength and stability can lower the risk of injury and increase power application for sports performance. Strengthening the core muscles of the trunk and pelvis provides a stable platform for the actions of the shoulder, arm and leg muscles. Pilates exercises are a popular and effective way to develop core strength and stability.

Muscles of the trunk and pelvis – Some of the most important muscles of the core are the deeper abdominal muscles that wrap and protect the spine; the abdominal muscles that run along the front and sides of the abdomen; the erector muscles of the lower back; and the muscles of the pelvic floor and hips. Having a so-called 'six pack' of abdominal muscles does not necessarily mean having good core strength and stability. Some of the most important 'core' muscles actually lie underneath the six-pack and, together with the erector muscles of the spine, help maintain good posture and balance during daily activity. This means that just doing sit-ups for the abs will not usually be enough to develop core strength.

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Training for core strength and stability The major aim of core strength training is to perform exercises that closely resemble specific movements during a particular sport. Emphasis should be placed on diagonal and rotational movements, and promoting balance and strength by performing exercises standing or sitting on different (including unstable) surfaces such as balance beams, wobble boards, foam rollers, and fit balls. Training should emphasize a balance between developing agonist (prime movers) and antagonist muscles. In many sports, movements are performed while balancing on one leg, or shifting the body weight from one leg to another, and so exercises mimicking these actions should be incorporated into the training program. Examples include a kicking a football while on the run and pushing hard while cycling up steep hills.

Exercises to improve core strength Since there are several different trunk, back and pelvic muscles that make up the 'core', it is important to perform a variety of exercises that target these muscle groups. Core strength can be developed by performing: Pilates exercises, Standard abdominal exercises (such as sit ups and crunches) Fit ball exercises (including roll outs, walk outs, sit ups, leg lifts, and jack knives) Resistance training exercises with an emphasis on deadlift, squat and lunge

exercises, as well as 'power' exercises using 'Olympic'–style lifts (cleans, clean and press, and push press) Medicine ball training (overhead throwing to a partner, side throw, rugby passing, lunge exercises holding the medicine ball above the head) Balancing exercises on a wobble board, balance beam, or foam roller (standing on one or both feet, walking forwards and backwards, with eyes open or eyes closed). Although not absolutely necessary, these exercises provide another level of stimulation and are encouraged whenever there is access to such specialist equipment

Dianne Villano is a personal fitness instructor certified through the National Academy of Sports Medicine with over 17 years experience. Dianne specializes in weight loss programs and programs for beginners. For more articles or free fitness tools visit www.custombodiestampabay.com.

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The Core: Movie Review

By C. Bailey–Lloyd/LadyCamelot

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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

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

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