

November



Newsletter 2018



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Education

The Importance of Core Strength

Whether sitting, standing, walking, jumping or running, the core is involved in almost every movement we make. The core is the central hub connecting the upper and lower body where most motions originate. We may think our extremities do the majority of the work, but most movement begins at the center of the body and moves outward. Building a strong core foundation is not just important for athletes, but for anyone at any age.

Most people know the abdominals are part of the core, but the core also encompasses the muscles in the lower back, the obliques, and those which support the pelvis and hips. Many of these muscles are layered under others making it hard to see tone and definition. Neglecting these “hidden” muscles can create deficiencies in balance, stability, and support.

Let’s take a look at why core strength is essential for everyone.

Improve Posture

We tend to sit for hours and hours each day. Due to a weak core, we tend to round our shoulders and slouch forward. Focusing on developing our core can help create better posture while sitting and standing. Good posture helps us look taller and decreases wear and tear on the spine. In addition, better posture can help you breathe easier as well as improve digestion and circulation.

Improve Stability and Balance

The core muscles surround the spine and pelvis creating a lot of support and stabilization. Strengthening these muscles can help stabilize your body while standing on even or uneven terrain and can possibly help lessen the risk of falling.

Prevent Injuries

A weak core can contribute to a variety of injuries. Many injuries occur when the muscles that move each part of our body become imbalanced. Some muscles may end up short and tight, whereas others may be overstretched and weak. Due to decreased strength, the body may overuse other muscle groups to compensate and produce the desired movement. Lower back pain can often be attributed to the lack of a strong core. By creating well-balanced strength our bodies become more resilient.

Perform Activities More Efficiently

Whether performing activities of daily living or those which are more athletic, you will need to use less energy and effort if you have a strong core. Swinging a baseball bat or unloading the dishwasher requires your core muscles to work together to perform the movement safely and effectively. Weak muscles require more energy to move. Training all of the major core muscles to work together can help improve the strength and flexibility of muscles in other areas of our body.



How to Improve Core Strength

To improve core strength, incorporate a variety of exercises to target multiple core muscles. Since we move in a variety of planes (front and back, side to side and rotate), it's important to perform exercises in each plane. Limiting core training to simple crunches or focusing on exercises to create “six-pack” abs isn't going to produce a well--rounded core.

Plank – a great static exercises to work your inner core. Assume beginning position of a push up, with elbows under shoulders. Engage the core to lift your body and maintain a straight line from shoulders to toes. Squeeze the glutes to stabilize the body. Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Side Plank – this challenging pose promotes balance and strength while focusing on your obliques. Lie on your side with your bottom elbow underneath your shoulder and your forearm perpendicular to your body. Position the top foot in front of the bottom foot. Lift your hips up to form a straight line with your body from head to toe. Hold this position for 30 seconds. Repeat on the opposite side.

Bird Dog – this anti-rotation core stability exercise requires glute and shoulder strength as well as coordination. Kneel on the floor positioning your knees and feet hip-width apart. Position hands directly under shoulders shoulder-width apart. Extend your right arm in front of your body while slowly extending your left leg behind you until both are parallel with the floor. Slowly lower each down to the floor and then repeat other side. Repeat this



Clam Shells – benefits of this floor exercise include activating the gluteus maximus to help bring more power and stability to your hips. Lie on your side with your knees bent 90 degrees; feet and hips stacked and head resting on your arm. Lift the top knee up, while keeping feet stacked. Repeat this movement 10 to 15 times, keeping pelvis stabilized throughout the movement.

References:

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From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader, Becky McGraw

Exercise of the Month

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Overall Core Circuit

How it works: Complete all 6 exercises for 30 seconds each, without any rest between exercises. Once all 6 exercises are complete, rest for 1-2 minutes. Repeat core circuit for a total of 3-5 rounds.

Alternate raising opposite arms and legs.



Drop hips for rest as needed.
30 seconds right, then 30 seconds left side plank.



Light knee taps to refrain from resting.



Dig through heels to raise hips high.



Alternate right and left leg raises in 30 seconds.



Look up at ceiling entire crunch.



From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader, Nicki Bowers



Food for Gut Health

In biology, the gut is recognized as the digestive tract, belly and abdomen.

Did You Know?

There are trillions of fungi, bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms floating around in your gut?

Do not be alarmed! Most of these microorganisms, or microbes, are the “good stuff.” Located in the stomach, large intestine and colon of the digestive tract. These microbes aid in gut health through synthesis of vitamins and essential amino acids. In addition, the microbes in the gut create metabolic byproducts from undigested food in the small intestine. This action benefits the structure and health of digestive tract cells, as byproducts create a barrier against harmful organisms and provide energy to the cells. Unknown to many, these microbes play a critical role in the immunity of our intestines. They can initiate and terminate inflammation, and communicate with proteins that activate other immune cell responses.

What Does This Mean For Your Gut Health?

The state of these microbes affects your physical and even emotional health. The inverse is true as well! Your physical and emotional health affect the state of your gut’s microorganisms.

Your gut and brain are very connected! Studies have revealed that overwhelming stress and inflammation on the nervous system changes the composition of the microbes within just one day of the incident. Alternatively, dietary fiber aids microbes in providing energy to the entire body!

KEFIR

KIMCHI

KOMBUCHA

TEMPEH



From Corporate Fitness Works Health Fitness Specialist, Kelechi Anyaugo

Healthy Eating Continued...

Healthy and Helpful Guts

There are some bacteria that **NEED** to stay in the gut for optimal health. The ***Lactobacillus*** bacteria remain in the stomach, and release lactic acid that helps break down carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

Helicobacter pylori are also a bacteria found in the stomach, but have mutated over time. In great amounts, this bacteria promotes mucous in the stomach that can lead to gastric cancers. However, fear not because foods such as broccoli and cauliflower can help undo ***Helicobacter's*** damage!

Check out **figure A-1**, on page 1 and **figure A-2** below, to discover a few healthy sources of this and other bacterium.

Protein

Plant-based proteins do not disrupt microbiota composition. Consuming pinto beans, black beans, chickpeas and lentils are a good place to start. They also are packed with fiber that is necessary for gastrointestinal tract movement.

Fats

Research has shown that diets rich in saturated fats (the bad fat found in dairy product, meat and lard) catalyze gut microbiota to promote metabolic inflammation [1]. However, eating monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (the good fat found in avocados, salmon, grapeseed oil and nuts) have shown no negative effects against microbiota composition and has heart healthy benefits.

Carbohydrates

Digestible (starches and sugars)

Studies have shown that consumption of natural, simple sugars such as glucose, lactose, sucrose and fructose increases in the gram positive microbes ***Bifidobacteria*** and decreases in gram negative microbes ***Bacteriodes*** [1]. In other words, consumption of healthy digestible carbohydrates such as potatoes, or even milk if you are not intolerant, has shown increases of bacteria that promote a healthy GI tract and decrease bacteria that are harmful to the stomach.

Non-digestible (fiber)

Fiber rich foods such as oats, barley and soybeans have the ability to modify the stomach's environment and promote bacteria that help the digestive system. While it is a phenomenal nutrient, too much fiber can cause constipation so consume about 25 g of fiber a day, spreading it out amongst fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Eat some of these to ensure your gut is in tip top shape!



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