

## Is Core Strength a Golden Ticket to Less Injury? Using These 6 Exercises to help with Sport Performance and Core Stability

Written by: Amber Hayes, DPT of Connect Physical Therapy

What is core strength? What is posture? Where do we start to improve these areas?

**Core strength** is the strength of the muscles that surround the torso. There is more to core strength than just seeking the “6-pack”. We have muscles in the region of our stomach, back, gluteals and pelvic floor, which all work together to keep us stable. Creating a strong “center” allows for increased ease of movement, and allows your arms and legs to move with better control, and usually, better alignment. Increased core strength helps, arguably EVERYTHING, but particularly it can assist with:

- Improved posture
- Increased ease of dynamic and agility movements through increased power
- Improved dynamic balance
- Reduces overall injury to the spine, upper and lower extremities

**Posture** is the natural way in which a person holds their body. This is heavily influenced by the musculoskeletal system which includes bones, ligaments, muscles and tendons. You have both STATIC and DYNAMIC posture. Static is your position while at rest, and dynamic is how you hold your body while moving. There is no such thing as perfect posture, but there are recommendations based on our anatomy.

Improving core strength inherently will also assist with improvements in posture. Core strength allows for a more stable spine, improved dynamic form with movement, and improved muscle balance throughout the body.

Keys to core stabilization exercises are:

- Starting with strength in a neutral spine position, aka sit ups are not always the answer
- Cues through touch and communication for correct muscle engagement to maintain form
- Work all “sides” of the core

Here are some examples:

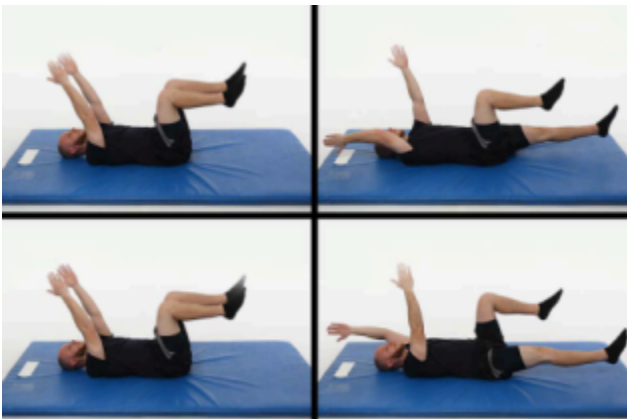
- 1) **Plank**: Support yourself on your forearms and your knees. Squeeze belly and glutes. Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times



- 2) **Bird dog:** Assume a quadruped position on hands and knees. Squeeze belly and glutes. Lift opposite arm and leg without moving back excessively. Repeat on the opposite side. Perform 20 repetitions on each side.



- 3) **Dead bug:** Lay on back. Lift arms toward ceiling and start with hips flexed to 90 degrees. At the same time, extend one leg toward the mat and one hand above the head. Repeat on the opposite side. Perform 20 repetitions on each side



- 4) **Hollow Hold:** Lay on back with knees bend up. Lift feet up and then reach toward feet with hands, hold 10 seconds. Rest and repeat 10 times



- 5) **Bridge:** Lay on back with knees bent. Squeeze glutes and tight abdominals, lift hips toward ceiling, pushing weight through heels. Repeat 3 sets of 10



- 6) **Tall knee Chops:** Assume a tall knee position. Pull anchored resistance band on diagonal and slowly return to starting position. Repeat 2 sets of 10 on each side



Improving core and postural strength has a direct correlation to increased sports performance. Core strength is your anatomical foundation. Build a strong one and you will have less worry in the future.

If you feel you need guidance, Connect Physical Therapy is your resource!