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Core Strengthening

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We have all heard the saying “you need to strengthen your core.” So what exactly is our “core” and why do we need to strengthen it?

Your body’s core is the area around your trunk and pelvis. It includes those abdominal and back muscles that keep you upright. We use these “core” muscles in everyday activities from walking to lifting heavy objects. It is important to keep these core muscles healthy and strong. With strong core muscles, it is easier to do physical activities, improve posture, and avoid back injury.

Core exercises are relatively simple and it doesn’t take specialized equipment to try these exercises. All you need is a carpeted floor or mat. Make sure to breathe freely and deeply during each exercise. Repeat each of the following core exercises five times. Gradually work up to 15-30 repetitions. It is recommended that you perform these exercises at least three to five times per week.

Performing these exercises on a consistent basis is key to keeping your core muscles strong and healthy. It is equally important to maintain good posture and walk daily.

- **Bridge.** Lie on your back with your knees bent. Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise your hips off the floor until your hips are aligned with your knees and shoulders. Squeeze your buttocks together. Hold for three deep breaths. Return to the start position and repeat.
- **Abdominal Crunches.** Lie on your back and place your feet on a wall so that your knees and hips are bent at 90-degree angles. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise our head and shoulders off the floor. To avoid straining your neck, cross your arms on your chest rather than locking them behind your head. Hold for three deep breaths. Return to the start position and repeat.
- **Superman.** Lie on your stomach with a rolled towel or a small pillow under your hips to support your back. You might also use a folded towel to support your head. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise your right arm off the floor. Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right arm and repeat with your left arm. Raise your right leg off the floor. Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right leg and repeat with your left leg.
- **Quadruped.** Start on your hands and knees. Place your hands directly below your shoulders, and align your head and neck with your back. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise your right arm off the floor and reach ahead. Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right arm and repeat with your left arm. Raise your right leg off the floor. Tighten your trunk muscles for balance. Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right leg and repeat with your left leg.