



Improve Stability and Strength Through Core Training

by Heritage Community Fitness & Rehabilitation Centre

You may have heard people talking about the importance of core strength exercises; this article will help you learn more about your core, why you should be training it, and how to train it effectively!

What is your core?

Your core consists of a group of muscles in your torso between your shoulders and hips, including the abdominal, back, and pelvic muscles. Although the exact list of muscles can vary depending on which experts you talk to, the following list, as described at www.sportsmedicine.about.com, is widely accepted:

- **Rectus Abdominis** - located along the front of the abdomen, this is the most well-known abdominal muscle and is often referred to as the "six-pack" due to its appearance in fit and thin individuals.
- **Erector Spinae** - This group of three muscles runs along your neck to your lower back.
- **Multifidus** - located under the erector spinae along the vertebral column, these muscles extend and rotate the spine.
- **External Obliques** - located on the side and front of the abdomen.
- **Internal Obliques** - located under the external obliques, running in the opposite direction.
- **Transverse Abdominis (TVA)** - located under the obliques, it is the deepest of the abdominal muscles (muscles of your waist) and wraps around your spine for protection and stability.
- **Hip Flexors** - located in front of the pelvis and upper thigh. The muscles that make up the hip flexors include: **psoas major**, **iliacus**, **rectus femoris**, **pectineus**, **sartorius**
- **Gluteus medius and minimus** - located at the side of the hip
- **Gluteus maximus**, **hamstring group**, **piriformis** - located in the back of the hip and upper thigh leg.
- **Hip adductors** - located at medial thigh.

Why is core training important?

Having a strong core will lead to better stability, balance, and posture. For everyday activities, your core muscles are involved each time you bend, reach, twist, walk and change direction. Having the correct combination of strength and flexibility will allow you to move with ease and help prevent injuries to your back. For athletic performance, your core is your centre of power and helps to direct energy into your extremities. One of the best examples of how the muscles of your core work together, is the movement of a golf-swing; if you can visualize the bending, twisting, and power involved with this movement, you will begin to see how a strong core works to shift energy from your centre point out through the arms and legs.

How is core training done?

A well rounded program is required to target the variety of muscles in your trunk. You can begin by engaging your core muscles while performing other exercises such as a squat or bench press. Do this by firming the deep abdominal muscle called the Transverse Abdominis (TVA) – to feel this muscle, fake-cough; the deep muscle you feel contracting is your TVA.

Exercises that recruit multiple muscles at once and require those muscles to work together will be most effective. Many of the best exercises for your core require little or no equipment at all! At the end of this article, we have included exercises we recommend to improve core strength.

Keeping a strong core throughout your lifetime will improve your posture, protect your back, and help prevent injuries. The exercises are simple and don't require a lot of time. It's never too late to create an action plan!

Do you want to improve your core strength? We can help. Contact Heritage Fitness today to book an appointment with one of our personal trainers.



Airplane



Single Leg Bridge



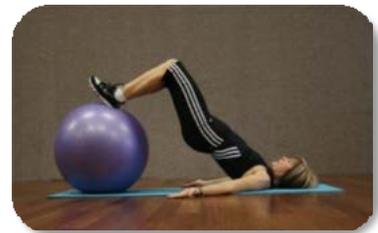
Single Leg Side Plank



Bird Dog Extension



BOSU Plank with Knee Tuck



Hamstring Curl on Ball



BOSU Squat



Upward Plank



Torso Twist with Med Ball