



Fire up your core!

Having strong and stable core muscles is key to good health. Core muscles are the muscles around your trunk and pelvis that work to give you balance and stability.

To maintain or strengthen your core muscles, core exercises should always be a part of your overall fitness program. Aside from the common sit-ups and pushups, there are many other core exercises you can incorporate into your fitness routine to get into better shape.

Through our four-week Core Challenge, you will learn about and engage in a variety of core exercises that will strengthen your core and help you gain some health benefits.

Health benefits of having a stable core

Research tells us that people who work on strengthening their core muscles on a regular basis receive various health benefits, including:

- ✓ Increased balance and stability
- ✓ Reduced risk of falling
- ✓ Improved posture
- ✓ Improved physical activity performance
- ✓ Improved quality of life
- ✓ Reduced lower back pain
- ✓ Reduced abdominal fat

The Core Challenge

Core exercises improve your balance and stability

Core exercises train the muscles in your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen to work in harmony. This leads to better balance and stability, whether on the playing field or in daily activities. In fact, most sports and other physical activities depend on stable core muscles.

Core exercises don't require specialized equipment or a gym membership

You can do these anywhere. Any exercise that involves using your abdominal and back muscles in a coordinated manner counts as a core exercise. For example, using free weights in a way that involves maintaining a stable trunk can train and strengthen several of your muscles at once, including your core muscles. You may also try several specific core exercises to stabilize and strengthen your core.

Core exercises can help tone your abs

For more-defined abdominal muscles, core exercises are important. Although it takes aerobic activity to burn abdominal fat, core exercises can strengthen and tone the underlying muscles.

Core exercises help make most physical activities easier to do

Strong core muscles make it easier to do everything from swinging a golf club to getting a glass from the top shelf or bending down to tie your shoes. Weak core muscles leave you susceptible to poor posture, lower back pain and muscle injuries.

Core exercises can help you reach your fitness goals

Aerobic exercise and muscular fitness are the primary elements of most fitness programs. But to have a well-rounded fitness program, consider including core exercises in the mix as well.

Core Challenge—Get Started

Whether you're a novice taking the first steps towards fitness or a committed fitness fanatic hoping to optimize your results, or if you're somewhere in between, take the Core Challenge and get closer to your fitness goals. Always consult a physician before beginning an exercise program. To participate in the Core Challenge and fire up your core, do the following:

- 1 Select and follow one or more core workouts found on the Core Challenge Workout cards.
- 2 Use the Core Challenge tracking sheet to complete your 21 core workouts over the next four weeks.
- 3 Complete, sign and submit your Core Challenge tracking sheet to your wellness coordinator.

