

# Core exercises -

Core exercises strengthen your core muscles, including abs, back & pelvis



## Abdominal crunch

Abdominal crunches are a classic core exercise:

- 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 your 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.



## Bridge

To work various core muscles in combination, try a bridge:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent (A). Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Avoid tilting your hips. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your hips off the floor until your hips are aligned with your knees and shoulders (B). Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position and repeat.



## Single-leg abdominal press

The single-leg abdominal press is another popular core exercise:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent (A). Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Avoid tilting your hips. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your right leg off the floor so that your knee and hip are bent at 90-degree angles. Rest your right hand on top of your right knee (B).
- Push your hand against your knee while using your abdominal muscles to pull your knee toward your hand. Keep your arm straight. Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position and repeat using your left hand and left knee.



### Double-leg abdominal press

When you're comfortable with the single-leg abdominal press, try the double-leg abdominal press:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent (A). Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Avoid tilting your hips. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your legs off the floor one at a time so that your knees and hips are bent at 90-degree angles. Rest your hands on top of your knees (B).
- Push your hands against your knees while using your abdominal muscles to pull your knees toward your hands. Keep your arms straight. Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position and repeat.



### Double-leg abdominal press variations

To work your core muscles more completely, try variations of the double-leg abdominal press:

- **Opposite hands on opposite knees.** Place each hand on the opposite knee, toward the inside of the knee (A). Your arms will cross over each other. Push your hands against your knees while pulling your knees toward your hands. Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat.
- **Hands on outside of knees.** Place your hands along the sides of your knees (B). Use your hands to push your knees inward. At the same time, create resistance by pushing your knees away from the centre. Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat.



### Segmental rotation

Segmental rotation is another way to exercise your core muscles:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your back in a neutral position. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Keeping your shoulders on the floor, let your knees fall slowly to the left (A). Go only as far as is comfortable. You should feel a stretch, but no pain. Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position. Repeat the exercise to the right (B).



### Modified plank

This core exercise is called the modified plank:

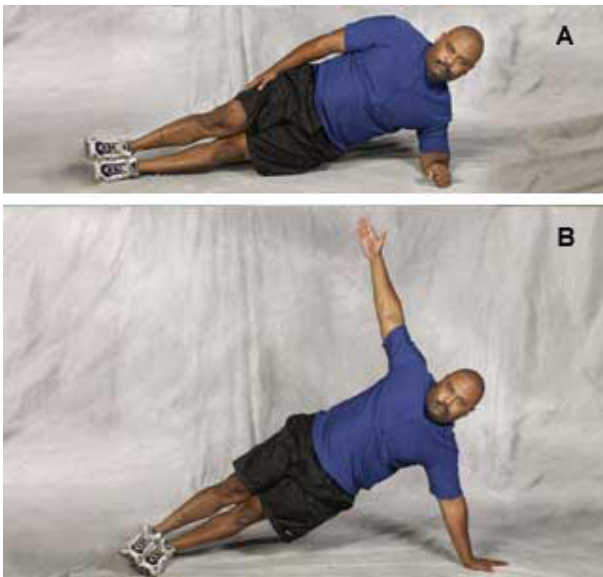
- Lie on your stomach. Raise yourself up so that you're resting on your forearms and your knees. Align your head and neck with your back, and place your shoulders directly above your elbows. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Create resistance by pressing your elbows and your knees toward one another. Neither should move from their positions on the floor. Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position and repeat.



### Modified plank variations

Try these variations on the modified plank:

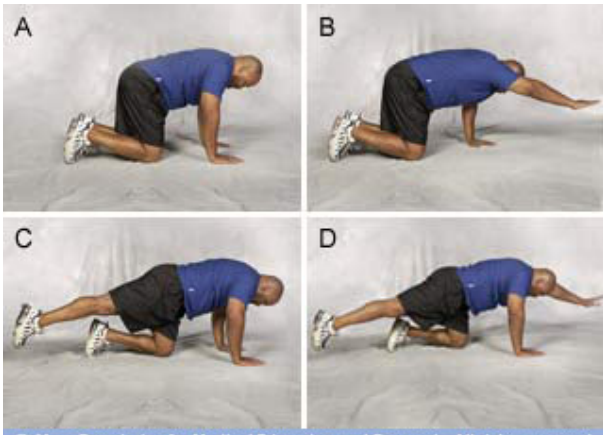
- Lie on your stomach. Raise yourself up so that you're resting on your forearms and your knees. Align your head and neck with your back, and place your shoulders directly above your elbows. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your right arm off the floor (A). Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat with your left arm.
- Raise your right leg off the floor (B). Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat with your left leg.
- For added challenge, raise your left arm and your right leg at the same time. Repeat with your right arm and left leg.



### Side plank

The side plank challenges your stability and works the muscles along the side of your body:

- Lie on your left side, raising yourself onto your left forearm (A). Place your left shoulder directly above your left elbow, keeping your shoulders, hips and knees in alignment. Rest your right arm along the side of your body.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles. Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat on your right side.
- For added challenge, balance on your left hand. Raise your hips off the floor and extend your right hand toward the ceiling (B). Hold for three deep breaths. Repeat on your right side.



### Quadruped

This core exercise is called the quadruped:

- Start on your hands and knees. Place your hands directly below your shoulders, and align your head and neck with your back (A). Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your right arm off the floor and reach ahead (B). Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right arm and repeat with your left arm.
- Raise your right leg off the floor (C). Tighten your trunk muscles for balance. Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right leg and repeat with your left leg.
- For added challenge, raise your left arm and your right leg at the same time (D). Repeat with your right arm and left leg.

### Superman

This core exercise, called the superman, can help you strengthen your lower back:



- 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 (A). Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right arm and repeat with your left arm.
- Raise your right leg off the floor (B). Hold for three deep breaths. Lower your right leg and repeat with your left leg.

**If you have a spondylolisthesis, do not perform this last exercise.**