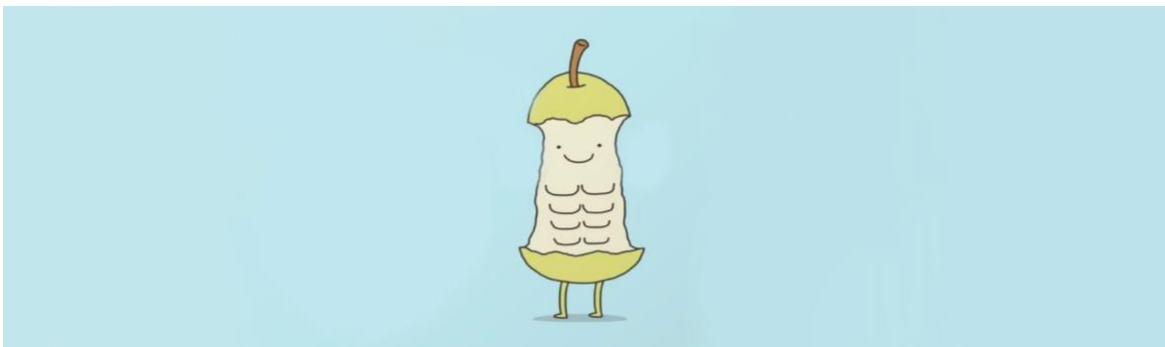




## An Introduction to a Strong Core for Beginners

Written by Joelle Solomon – May 29, 2022

---



Having a strong core at any stage in life, and especially as we age is one of the most important things we can do for our health. There are many misconceptions about what having a strong core means. Most people visualize an image of someone with zero body fat and 6-pack abs. But having a strong core actually has nothing to do with either of those.

What I am referring to when I use the word “core” is a very deep, complex structure of muscles that helps our spine, organs, muscles and joints stay healthy, strong and stable. Some muscles connect vertebrae to vertebrae, forming the structure of our spine. Some muscles wrap around our whole torso like a corset, and some attach from our ribs to our pelvic bone, helping us rotate, flex and extend our spines.

When we have a strong core (i.e., all of these muscles are trained in a functional & balanced way), this can improve our lives in many different ways. Our balance, digestion, breathing patterns, and overall strength improves. We may even have more opportunities to engage in as a result of increased confidence and trust in our bodies. Our risk of injury, chronic pain, even our stress levels begin decreasing.

Below I’ll share with you 4 simple practices for beginners that you can easily incorporate into your days to help your core stay strong and healthy.

### 1. Practice Balancing

If our core is weak, our balance will be weak. This increases our chance for injury from falling, and chronic pain as other parts of our body will begin compensating for what our core is meant to be doing.

Some simple ways to practice balancing are:

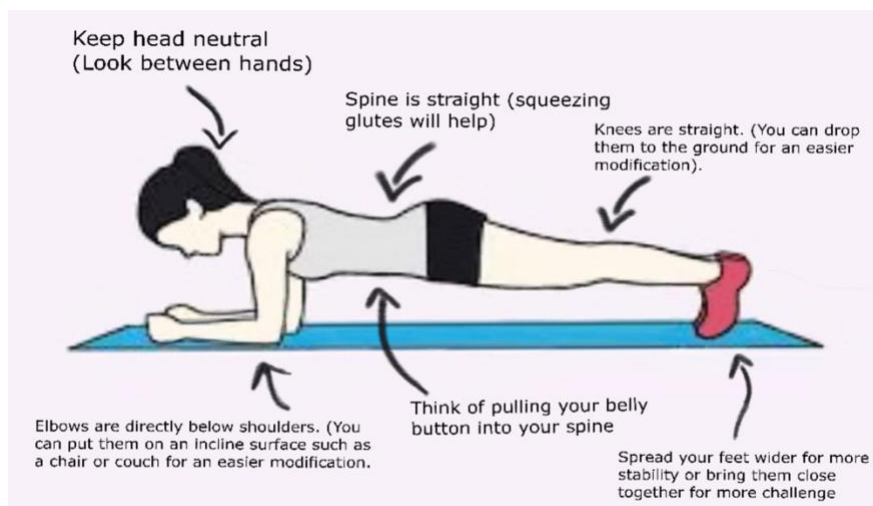
- Stand on one leg while moving your arms around (while you are cooking or doing your hair)
- Walk with your heel right in front of your toe (like walking on a tightrope)
- Walk on bumpy/uneven terrain (walk in the grass or hiking trails)
- Stand up and sit down without using your hands
- Find yoga postures suitable for your level of experience
- Stand on a Bosu ball (you can incorporate upper body movements with this too)
- Sit on an exercise ball instead of a chair
- Free form dancing (everyone can do it)

Remember when trying out new movements to find something that feels challenging for you but not so difficult that it is causing pain or distress. This can be an opportunity for you to find some joy in movement and maybe even take yourself on some new adventures.

## 2. Planks

Planks are a type of movement that do not target any one specific muscle but rather, targets multiple muscles all at once. So we are not only working the core, we are also working the legs and upper body. Planks help with our overall strength and endurance and can make a huge improvement with lower and upper back pain and poor posture.

It's important to make sure you are using proper technique and start slow. If you feel any pain or unnecessary strain while doing a plank, its likely that you are not doing it properly, or are holding it for too long and need to consult a professional. See the image below for the 6 most important things to remember when planking.



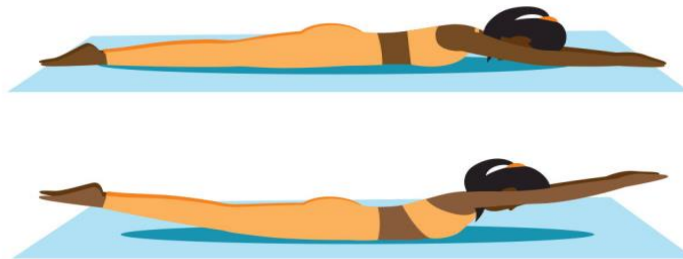
You can hold the plank anywhere from 5 seconds to 60 seconds depending on your own strength and comfort level. Remember to start slow, breathe and listen to your body.

### 3. Remember your Back

When strengthening the core, it is common to only focus on the front or sides of the torso and forget about the back. When training the back as part of the core, you are training all of the muscles that keep you upright and your spine straight. Weakness here will cause slouched posture and gradually a rounding forward of the spine. Two of my favourite exercises for strengthening the back are:

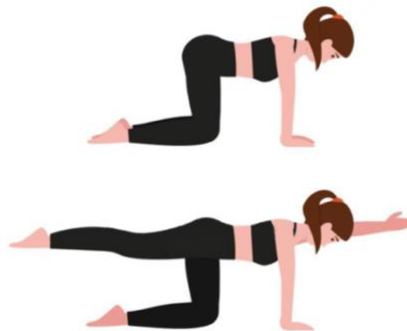
#### Supermans

This exercise can be done as a static hold or as a dynamic movement (up and down as repetitions). Remember as you lift your head, arms and legs off the floor to do it in a slow and controlled way rather than with a fast, flinging motion. Begin with 10 repetitions and increase slowly over time as the difficulty decreases.



#### Bird-Dog

This exercise can also be done as a static hold or as a dynamic movement, switching sides with each repetition. Begin with 10 repetitions, lifting the arm and opposite leg with a slow squeeze, and increase the number of repetitions as the difficulty decreases.



### 4. Rotate, Flex & Extend

The major abdominal muscles in the core are responsible for rotating, flexing and extending the torso. These are the stereotypical movements that you think of when you think of strengthening your core: sit

ups, Russian twists, bicycle crunches, knee tucks, etc. In my opinion however, these are not as important as the 3 types of movement I listed previously.

To create a balance with these exercises, I would recommend finding two flexion/extension movements such as a crunch and leg lifts, and two rotation movement such as Russian twists and bicycle crunches. You can perform all 4 of these exercises back to back in a circuit type format. Usually 15 repetitions is a good number for these exercises.



Crunch



Leg lifts



Russian twist



Bicycle crunch

Remember to start slow and if something doesn't feel right for your body, either don't do it or consult with a professional.

---

Strengthening the core can seem like a tedious task but by incorporating just a couple of these suggestions into your daily routine, it can be a new adventure that in time will lead to beneficial changes for you and your well-being. Remember to take it slow and make the journey enjoyable.

*Joelle Solomon*

Health & Wellness Coach

PS – These recommendations should not be considered medical advice. I encourage you to talk to your doctor or other health care professional so you can care for your body in a way that works best for you!

Work with me:

✉ [joelle.solomon@outlook.com](mailto:joelle.solomon@outlook.com)

🌐 [www.genesistherapies.com](http://www.genesistherapies.com)

📷 [@genesistherapies](https://www.instagram.com/genesistherapies)