

12 CORE EXERCISES

This challenge is designed to strengthen core muscles and increase functional fitness.

Did you know that eighty percent of people will experience back pain at some point in their life? Most back pain is in the lower back and is often caused by a muscle imbalance. Muscle imbalance is when one muscle is being overworked while another is being underworked. One way to alleviate low back pain is to strengthen core muscles. These core muscles are all of the muscles from the shoulders to the hips. Most exercises focus on the abdominal muscles, but it is important to exercise all the muscles of the core as well. Here are 12 exercises to help strengthen your core muscles and increase your functional fitness.

To complete this challenge, perform each series of exercises three times. Check off one box for each successful completion. Breathe using the diaphragm at least three times for each position. Work up to being able to hold each position for one minute.

SERIES 1



McGILL CURL UP HOLD

Target Muscle: Abs

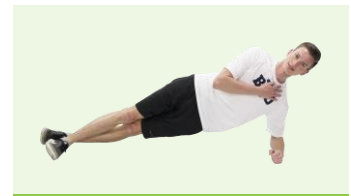
- Lay flat on back, one leg extended and the other leg bent
 - Place one hand under lower spine to keep good curvature in back
 - Keeping neck and head in line with body, raise core about 6 inches and hold
- TIP:** If neck muscle feels strained, put other hand under neck to keep it from straining



SIDE PLANK HOLD

Target Muscle: Quadratus Lumborum

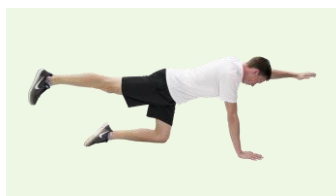
- Lay on side, with top leg placed in front of the bottom leg
- Rest one elbow on the ground, and cross the other across chest for support
- Lift hips off the ground until body is in a straight line from head to toe and hold



BIRD DOG HOLD

Target Muscle: Glutes, Torso Stabilizers

- Begin on hands and knees
- Slowly lift one leg and straighten, lifting no higher than hip
- Raise the opposite arm straight out in front, no higher than shoulder
- Make sure not to twist pelvis or arch back
- Hold on each side



FRONT PLANK HOLD

Target Muscle: Abs

- Get in plank position, keeping body flat
- Modified version: hold plank form against wall



SERIES 2



SIT-UP HOLD

Target Muscle: Hip Flexors

- Start by laying on back with knees bent and feet held
- Place hands behind neck so neck muscles aren't strained
- Slowly lower head to about a 60 degree angle, maintaining a natural slight curve in the lower back



WALL SIT HOLD

Target Muscle: Hip Stabilizers and Quads

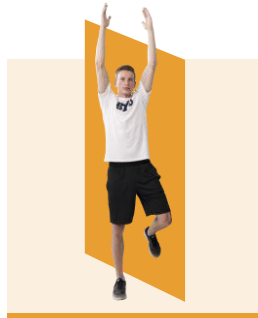
- Stand with back to a wall and slowly lower until hips and knees bend at a 90 degree angle
- Make sure not to shrug shoulders while keeping a slight curve in lower spine



SINGLE-LEG HIP HOLD

Target Muscle: Glute Medius

- Stand next to wall
- Lift leg closest to the wall and rest that knee against the wall
- Raise arms straight above head



SUPINE BRIDGE HOLD

Target Muscle: Glute Max

- Lay on back, knees bent
- Bridge up by pushing through heels and lifting hips off ground
- Squeeze the glutes, NOT the hamstrings



SERIES 3



BODY WEIGHT SQUAT HOLD

Target Muscle: Legs

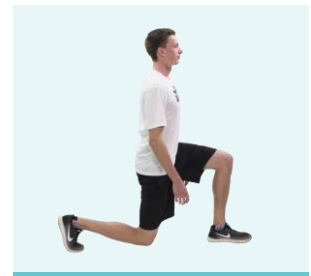
- Place feet shoulder-width apart
- Hinge hips back and pretend like you're sitting into a chair
- Lower down while pressing weight into heels
- Never let knees go over toes
- Pause, then lift back up slowly



SPLIT SQUAT HOLD

Target Muscle: Quads and Glute Max

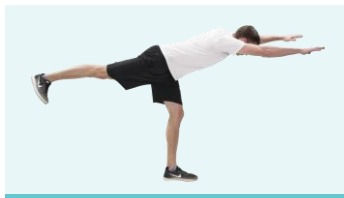
- Stand in a staggered stance with rear heel elevated and front foot flat
- Lower body down until back knee is at a 90 degree angle with the ground
- Hold on each side



SINGLE-LEG ROMANIAN DEAD LIFT HOLD

Target Muscle: Glutes and Hip Stabilizers

- Assume a single-leg stance
- Lower upper body by bending at the hip and swing back leg so it stays in line with torso without twisting hips
- Once back is parallel to floor and with hands pointed to the toes, hold and then switch sides



WALL PUSH-UP HOLD

Target Muscle: Chest

- Begin in a plank position against the wall with hands directly under shoulders
- Lower body by bending elbows, making sure to keep back flat and neck neutral

