

We All Need a Stronger Core!

Most people think of the *core* as just abdominal muscles, but it is actually made up of approximately 29 muscles that include deep abdominals, obliques, deep spinal musculature, hip flexor group and the glutes. The core is where your body's center of gravity is located and where all movement begins. The key role of the core is to support the upper body, primarily to prevent injury to the spinal column and to make it easier for you to do most physical activities.



Core exercises are important because they strengthen your core muscles, including abs, back and pelvis. You can do core exercises on a carpeted floor or mat. Breathe freely and deeply during each exercise. It is very important that you focus on tightening your deepest abdominal muscle — the transversus abdominis — during each exercise. This is the muscle you feel contracting when you cough.

Good Posture is VERY Important to a strong core group and the glutes. Pulling your shoulders back and sitting or standing up tall with your abs pulled up and in is one of the easiest core strengthening techniques you can do. Practice good posture while you are standing, lifting, riding a bike, or just sitting at your desk. Whenever you pass a mirror, look at yourself. Are you standing tall with your stomach pulled in and not sagging?

The core muscles are also responsible for efficient movement. Without effective core muscles, the upper body would flop around creating a lot more work for other muscles and joints in the body.

Core Muscle Exercises

Plank: This is the most basic form of stabilizing abdominal exercise you can do. Get down in pushup position, toes on the ground, but



Beefy Penne Bake

Ingredients:

- 8 oz. penne pasta of choice (whole grain, gf, chickpea, etc.)
- 8 oz. organic and/or grass-fed ground beef
- 1 24 oz. jar organic marinara sauce
- 1/2 chopped onion
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/8 tsp. dried red pepper
- 2 handfuls fresh baby spinach
- 1 cup fat-free ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded reduced-fat mozzarella cheese (or slices)
- 3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat 8"x8" baking dish with cooking spray. Cook penne until almost al dente. Drain. Heat large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and add beef. Cook until no longer pink. Drain. Stir in onion, garlic, basil and red pepper. Add 2 handfuls of fresh baby spinach. Cook 2 to 4 minutes. Add marinara. Reduce heat to medium and simmer uncovered until slightly thickened- 9 to 10 minutes. Combine ricotta, half of the parsley, 1/4 cup of the mozzarella and Parmesan in bowl. Pour half of the penne into dish. Layer on half of the sauce, cheeses, and remaining penne. Spread remaining sauce on top and sprinkle with remaining mozzarella. Bake 30 minutes. Garnish with remaining parsley. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

Feel free to add in other cooked vegetables if you wish such as peppers, zucchini, chopped broccoli, etc.

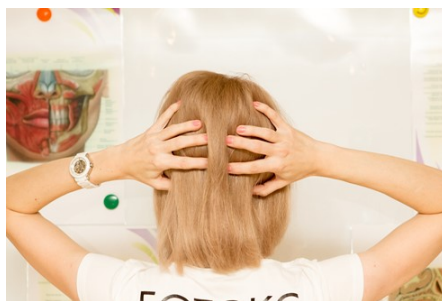
instead of your hands touching the ground — your elbows to fingertips (forearms) are. Then you use your core strength to hold your body in a completely straight line... with your stomach pulled in tight. This is a beginner's move.

Superman: Lie face down on the floor with your arms stretched out directly overhead like Superman. Raise your left arm and right leg into the air at the same time, also raising your chest slightly off the floor. Hold there for a second and squeeze the muscles of your lower back. Lower your limbs back to the ground then raise your right arm and left leg and hold for a second.

You can push down with the hand that is on the ground to help raise your other arm and chest higher off the ground. This exercise, even though it only uses your limbs as resistance, provides an excellent way to strengthen the lower back muscles.

Massage Your Way to Relaxation and Better Health

Massage is a wonderful way to relax, and as your muscles begin to relax, so does your mind, relieving stress and tension. The most common type of massage is Swedish massage, a soothing technique designed to relax and energize. Another common type of massage is Shiatsu (also known as acupressure). With Shiatsu, massage therapists use their fingers to manipulate the body's pressure points. Of course, you can go to a spa or visit your favorite massage therapist, but you can also perform simple massage on yourself. The following are a few techniques to try.



Scalp Massage: Place your thumbs behind your ears while spreading your fingers on top of your head. Move your scalp back and forth slightly by making circles with your fingertips for 15-20 seconds.

Sinus Pressure Massage: Place your fingertips at the bridge of your nose. Slowly slide your fingers down your nose and across the top of your cheekbones to the outside of your eyes.

Shoulder Massage: Relieve shoulder tension by reaching one arm across the front of your body to your opposite shoulder. Using a

Chickpea Salad

A super fresh, quick and easy-to-prepare salad that makes the perfect healthy lunch entrée, or a dinner side dish.



Ingredients:

- 1 (15 oz.) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained well
- 2 cups chopped English cucumber
- 1 ¼ cups chopped Roma tomatoes (about 2)
- ¼ cup chopped red onion
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 ½ tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Add chickpeas, cucumber, tomatoes, red onion, and parsley to a bowl. Measure out olive oil into a liquid measuring cup, pour in lemon juice, garlic, Italian seasoning and season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour dressing over mixture in bowl. Toss to evenly coat, season with more salt to taste if needed. Salad will taste good for a few days but texturally it's best eaten within a few hours.

- Garden cucumbers can be substituted just peel first.
- Grape tomatoes will work in place of Roma tomatoes (use 1.5 cups).
- Red wine or white wine vinegar can be substituted for lemon juice.

You could also add one of these options:

- 1/3 cup feta
- 1 (5 oz.) can tuna in water, well drained
- 1 avocado, diced
- ¾ cup cooked quinoa
- ¼ cup sliced Kalamata or black olives
- 1 cup chopped bell pepper

*NOTE: It is best the day it is prepared as the salt and dressing will draw moisture from the vegetables, but it will still taste good for 2 days. Keep it stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container, and don't let it sit at room temperature too long as it is best served cold.

Serves 4

Recipe and photo - <https://www.cookingclassy.com/chickpea-salad/>

circular motion, press firmly on the muscle above your shoulder blade. Repeat on the other side.

Eye Massage: Close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows, near the bridge of your nose. Slowly increase the pressure for 5-10 seconds, then gently release. Repeat 2-3 times.

Although self-massage is good for stress relief, getting a massage from a professional massage therapist can be tremendously relaxing and more thorough than what you can do yourself. When booking a massage, try types like Swedish or Shiatsu, which promote overall relaxation. Deep tissue and sports massages are more aggressive. They often target specific areas and may leave you sore for a couple of days, making them less effective for relaxation and stress relief. The American Massage Therapy Association provides an online directory of massage therapists at www.amtamassage.org.

Restless Leg Syndrome

More than 12 million Americans are affected by Restless Legs Syndrome. Even if you're exhausted, and you feel as though every part of you could fall asleep in minutes, your legs — and your brain — may make it difficult for you. Restless Legs Syndrome is a neurological disorder that can make falling and staying asleep tough to do. The classic description of restless legs is a "creepy-crawly" sensation. Some people say it's an electric feeling. Many people may not even have a description, just an uncontrollable urge to move their legs.



Symptoms, according to the Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation, include:

- **The urge to move their legs.** People with restless legs syndrome feel compelled to move their legs often due to the strange sensations, which helps create the "restless" appearance of the condition. Once people with the condition start moving their legs, the symptoms usually go away or at least improve. When the patients stop moving, their symptoms return. Over time, movement may cease to relieve restless legs.



Pepper Jack Chicken with Succotash

Ingredients:

- 4 ounces pepper-jack cheese, shredded
- 2 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped
- 2 large skinless, boneless chicken breasts (12 ounces each)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for brushing
- Kosher salt
- 1 ½ to 2 tablespoons Cajun spice blend
- Vegetable oil, for the grill
- 1 cup frozen lima beans, thawed
- 1 medium yellow summer squash, diced
- 2 cups corn kernels
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- Juice of 1 lime

Directions:

Combine the cheese and arugula in a bowl. Cut a deep 2-inch-wide pocket in the thickest part of each chicken breast with a paring knife. Stuff with the arugula mixture. Brush with olive oil and season with salt and the Cajun spice blend. Preheat a grill to high. Grill the chicken until blackened and a thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 155 degrees F, 8 to 10 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over high heat. Add the lima beans, squash and corn, season with salt and cook until the squash is just tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook 2 more minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the lime juice. Slice the chicken and serve with the succotash.

Recipe and photo - <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/pepper-jack-chicken-with-succotash-recipe-2105215>

- **Increased problems at night.** People typically notice that their restless legs syndrome symptoms, like the odd sensations and the urge to move, grow worse in the evening or at night. They feel the sensations at rest. This is largely the reason why people who have this condition find it hard to fall asleep.

What You Can Do

Avoid substances or foods that may be causing or worsening the problem. These include alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine.

Consult with your doctor and review all medications you are taking. Certain drugs could be causing the problem. Underlying medical conditions including: diabetes, nutritional deficiencies, kidney disease, anemia, thyroid disease, varicose veins or Parkinson's disease should be treated. Dietary supplements, including magnesium, could be recommended.

Stretching can help.

Warm bath with Epsom salts before bed works for some people. Hot or cold baths and whirlpool baths may also help.

Exercise and relaxation techniques work for some.

Hot or cold baths and whirlpool baths may help.

Physical therapy including limb massage, electrical stimulation helps some people.

If you only have occasional symptoms, you may not feel you need to see your health care provider; however, if your restless legs syndrome symptoms are interfering with your life, you should consult your doctor. There are medications available for Restless Legs Syndrome.

At the Gameplan for Living, we know that the future of healthcare is in the prevention of illness and injuries.

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Grilled Ratatouille Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 small eggplant
- Kosher salt
- 3 medium tomatoes
- 1 medium zucchini
- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 1 small red onion
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

Directions:

Slice the eggplant into ½ inch-thick rounds. Soak in a bowl of lightly salted water, 15 to 20 minutes; drain and squeeze out the excess moisture. Meanwhile, slice the tomatoes and zucchini into ½ inch-thick rounds. Stem and seed the bell pepper; slice the pepper and onion into ½ inch-thick rings.

Heat a grill or grill pan to medium high. Brush the vegetables with the olive oil on both sides and season with ½ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Grill the vegetables (in batches if necessary), turning, until soft and marked, about 6 minutes for the tomatoes, 7 to 8 minutes for the bell pepper, onion and zucchini, and about 10 minutes for the eggplant.

Let cool. Drizzle the vegetables with the vinegar. Divide the zucchini and eggplant among plates and arrange in a circle, overlapping slightly. Top with the bell pepper, tomato, and onion. Sprinkle with the basil.

4 Servings