

Core Stabilizing Ab Exercises to Help Prevent Injury in Seniors

The core extends from the ribcage down through the pelvis and hips. It wraps around the muscles that support your spine.

As people age, they lose strength and muscle throughout the body. They also tend to sit more and not use the important muscles in the core as often.

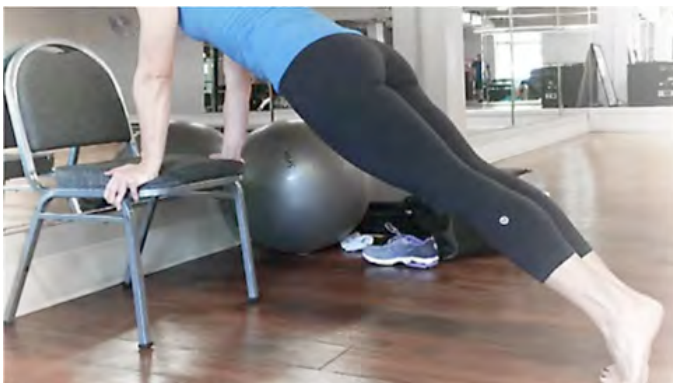
For seniors, core strength is critical for posture, injury prevention, and longevity. The core muscles support your whole body and are used in all your daily activities. Lifting, walking, and stair climbing all require the use of your core. It's what stabilizes and drives your limb movement.

Core Exercises for Stability

Keeping the core strong is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Learning the best core exercises is simple, and you don't need a gym membership to do it. A sturdy chair and a little bit of time a few days a week can make all the difference.

Chair Planks



Planks are a great way to strengthen the deep muscles in our core. Unfortunately, they aren't easy muscles to target. But practicing the feeling of drawing in through your belly button and engaging those inner, deep muscles can help develop them. As a result, you'll be more aware of your body and posture.

Equipment needed: You'll need a sturdy chair, like a kitchen table chair for this movement.

Muscles worked: Planks help stabilize and strengthen our transverse abdominals. These are the muscles that lay low in your trunk, wrapping around your spine. They lie under your rectus abdominal

muscles (the infamous six-pack muscles) and protect your spine.

1. Place your chair up against a wall in a safe place away from other furniture. Position the seat of the chair facing you.
2. Stand facing your chair and place the heels of your hands on the seat. You want them near the corners of the chair's front legs.
3. Walk your feet back until your head, shoulders, hips, and feet are in a long line.
4. Adjust the distance of your feet to the chair so you can comfortably hold this position.
5. Unlock the elbows and keep your gaze forward. Your hands should line up under your shoulders. Squeeze your heels together.
6. Hold this position for as long as you can, concentrating on the sensation of drawing your belly button up and in toward your spine. Work up to 3 to 5 repetitions.

Take It to the Next Level

If your chair planks become easy and you can hold that position for a minute or longer, you can start to challenge yourself by doing planks on the floor.

Seated Knee Lifts



Knee lifts are progressive exercises. No matter your level of fitness, they can help you build up inner core strength. The single-sided nature of this movement encourages improvement in balance and helps create low abdominal strength.

Equipment needed: You will need your sturdy chair, like a kitchen table chair.

Muscles worked: Knee lifts work the lower abdominal muscles as well as your transverse abdominals. They encourage core stabilization of the trunk.

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1. Start by sitting up in your chair toward the end of the seat.
 2. Sit up tall. Imagine lengthening from the crown of the head down through your hips.
 3. With control, engage your lower abdominals and lift one knee up 3 to 4 inches. Hold this position for 5 seconds.
 4. Lower the leg.
 5. Repeat on the other leg.
 6. Start by doing 6 to 8 on each leg. Work up to 10 to 12 reps.
6. Repeat this movement on the other side.
 7. Start with 6 to 8 on each side. Work up to 10 to 12 reps.

Take It to the Next Level

As you gain strength with this movement, try it in a standing position for a challenge.

The Takeaway

Core strength is critical for posture, injury prevention, and longevity. Keeping this part of your body strong is one of the easiest things to do for your health. Luckily, you don't need expensive gyms or machines. You can do these exercises anywhere. Just be sure to see your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

Oblique Side Bends



Incorporating this movement into your exercise routine will give your trunk and core more stabilization and spinal support. It can also help with other movements you do in your daily life.

Equipment needed: a sturdy kitchen chair

Muscles worked: Your obliques are the muscles that run up the sides of your trunk. These are an important piece of your core's supportive structure, but are often neglected.

1. Sit tall toward the end of your chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Lengthen the spine as if one string was pulling the crown of your head to the ceiling, and one string was pulling from the tailbone down to the floor.
3. Place your fingertips behind your ears with your elbows out wide.
4. Exhale and bend to 1 side, trying not to lean forward.
5. Hold this position for 2 seconds and then