

Exercises to Strengthen Your Core Muscles

Looking after your core muscles helps to relieve back pain while your bump grows — and helps your body bounce back after delivery.



Our core muscles consist of the pelvic floor, abdominal and back muscles. As your baby grows, these muscles stretch.

Core strengthening exercises can help to increase stability of the pelvic region and tone weakened abdominals to help increase support for the back and prevent back pain.

Below are some exercises that are ideal during pregnancy to strengthen your core. Do remember that you should avoid lying on your back after week 16 and avoid holding your breath during the exercises.

Aeroplane in Four Point Kneeling

You need to get down on your hands and knees on a mat for this pose. To ensure good posture, check that your shoulders are above your hands and that your hips are above your knees.

Brace your tummy muscles as you raise your left arm and right leg at the same time. Hold this position for five seconds, and then do the same with the right arm and the left leg to complete the set. Repeat 10 times for each side.

When raising your limbs, keep your spine in a neutral position and make sure your lower back is not arched. A great way to check your posture is to practice with a mirror on your side and a raised butt is a usual indicator of an overextended spine.

Half Squat

Stand upright with feet shoulder-width apart. Do not lock your knees in extension and raise your arms forward throughout this exercise. Bracing your tummy muscles, gently squat as though you're lowering yourself to sit in a chair. Hold your lowered pose for 5 seconds, and straighten back up to a standing position. Follow the steps to do 10 squats.

Do not hold your breath in this exercise, and make sure your knees do not move forward beyond your toes.

Gym Ball Alternate Leg Raise

Placing your feet shoulder-width apart, tighten your tummy muscles and gently raise one foot to straighten the leg. Doing this whilst balancing on the ball is tricky, so take your time to straighten one leg and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly lower that leg and repeat the steps with the other leg.

Avoid holding your breath throughout the exercise, and repeat it 10 times on each leg.

Gym Ball Hip Extension

Begin with kneeling on a mat and with a gym ball in front of you. Rest your hands on the ball and ensure your body is upright and straight.

Tighten your tummy muscles and extend one leg backwards slowly and deliberately in a controlled manner to maintain your balance. Hold your extended leg out for 5 seconds and slowly bring it back to rest on both knees. Repeat this exercise 10 times on each leg.

When extending your leg, keep your spine in a neutral position and make sure your lower back is not arched. A great way to check your posture is to practice with a mirror on your side and a protruding butt is a usual indicator of an overextended spine.

Side-Lying Clams

Lie on your side and support your head with one hand. Keep your knees bent and tighten your tummy muscles. Slowly raise your top knee by a few inches and lower it slowly. Do this 10 times, then lie on your other side and repeat 10 times.

Do not roll your pelvis forward or backward, keep your back straight and do not hold your breath as you do this exercise.

If you feel at all unwell or experience any pain during any of the exercises, stop immediately and consult your doctor.

By Catherine CHUA Bee Hong Senior Principal Physiotherapist, Elizabeth CHAN Jiahui Principal Physiotherapist, KK Women's and Children's Hospital

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Sources

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