

BASIC CORE EXERCISES

BRIDGES LEADING INTO CRAB WALK:

Bridges

- Lay on your back with your hands by your sides, your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Make sure your feet are under your knees.
- Shoulders relaxed and down.
- Tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles.
- With control raise your hips up to create a straight line from your knees to shoulders.
- Squeeze your core and think about pulling your belly button back toward your spine while keeping your back straight. If your hips sag or drop, lower yourself slowly back on the floor.
- The goal is to maintain a straight line from your shoulders to your knees and hold for 30 seconds. You may need to begin by holding the bridge position for a few seconds as you build your strength. It's better to hold the correct position for a shorter time than to stay in an incorrect position for longer period of time.

Single Leg Bridge

- Begin in the same position as mentioned above and lift hips keeping abs and glutes tight.
- Once in your bridge - slowly raise and extend one leg while keeping your pelvis raised and level. If your hips sag or drop, place the leg back on the floor and perform a double leg bridge until you become stronger.

Crab Walk

- Start with your glutes, hands and feet all on the ground. Press through your hands and feet to lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from your knees to your mid-back. Maintaining this straight line perform a crab walk. Focus on keeping glutes/belly tight, knees in alignment and landing softly on your hands.

SIDE PLANK LEADING INTO SIDE PLANK W/LEG LIFT

- Lie on your right side with your legs straight the left leg stacked directly on top of the right. Bend the right elbow and place it directly under your shoulder. Align your head with your spine, keeping shoulders, hips and knees in a nice straight line.
- Exhale, engage abs and lift hips and knees off the mat. The right side of your foot stays in contact with the mat. Elbow stays directly under your shoulder, head, shoulder, hips and knees are all aligned. Hold for as long as you can – working up to 30 sec. to a minute.
- For added intensity you can: (a) increase the length of time you are in a raised position, (b) raise the upper leg off the lower leg – height about parallel w/the floor, or (c) raise the lower leg off the floor while maintaining contact with your elbow and the foot of the upper leg only.

TOE TAPS – A FAVORITE PILATE'S MOVE

- Lie on your back with your knees bent 90 degrees in a “table top” position, so your calves and shins are parallel to the floor.
- Without changing the bend in your knees – and, WITHOUT allowing any part of your lower back to arch up and lose contact with the floor lower one leg to the floor until your toe taps the ground.
- Bring it back to start, and lower the other leg. Repeat for 10 and then change sides.

Advance move – lower both legs together, keeping the same bend in your knee as you lower and raise. Reminder, NO PART of your lower back should arch up and lose contact with the floor.

PLANK

- Lie on your stomach on an exercise mat or floor with your elbows close to your sides and directly under your shoulders, palms down and fingers facing forward. Engage your abdominal/core muscles. Contract your thigh muscles to straighten your legs and flex your ankles.
- Slowly lift torso and thigh off the floor or mat. Keep your torso and legs rigid without any sagging in ribcage or low back. Shoulders down and away from the ears (no shrugging), and directly over the elbows with palms facing down. Hips, knees and ankles are all in a nice straight line. No rounding of upper back.
- Breathe and try holding position for 30 sec. to 1 minute. If you can't do 30 seconds. To start try 3 – 10 sec. cycles or 2 – 15 sec. cycles.

BIRD DOG

- Start on the floor on your hands and knees. Knees will be underneath the hips and the crease of your wrists directly underneath your shoulders. Fingers are pointing forward.
- Engage your abdominal muscles, pull shoulder blades toward your hips and tighten glutes. Spine will be in a neutral position avoiding any excessive sagging or arching.
- Begin by slowly lengthening the left leg until it is long and strong. Left the leg off the floor until it is near parallel to the floor; not above hip height.
- Slowly raise and straighten right arm. Attempt to raise the arm until it is at, or near parallel, to the floor. Do not allow the shoulders to tilt upward. Keep both shoulders parallel to the floor. Remember your head is an extension of your spine and should remain aligned with the spine throughout the movement. Hold for 30 sec. to a minute.
NOTE: The leg and arm should only be raised as to heights that allow you to maintain the shoulders and pelvis in parallel to one another, the core engaged and the spine in neutral position.
- Gently lower yourself back to your starting position, maintaining balance and stability in the shoulders, pelvis and torso.
- Alternate sides: while changing sides, work very hard to keep the abdominals engaged. Imagine knitting your ribs together as though you were lacing up a tennis shoe. When you change sides, try to do so with minimal weight shift. Do not flop from one side to the next. Maintain balance and control.

NOTE: The bird-dog is an excellent exercise to train the body how to stabilize the lumbar spine (low back) during upper and lower extremity movement. Never exceed your ability to control movement in the low back

BALL CHEST PRESS – this one is fun. Every action has an opposite reaction. When you push a ball away from the body, it pushes back.

Your core is what keeps you from falling over.

- Stand 4 or more feet from a sturdy wall with knees slightly bent and the ball held against your chest with both hands, elbows out.
- Tighten the core and chest pass the ball to the wall, straightening your elbows to throw the ball forward.
- Catch the ball as it bounces off the wall, and repeat.