

## Core strength exercises post Covid-19 2021

<b>What is the core (or trunk)?</b>
<b>Erector spinae</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The erector spinae is a back muscle that extends your trunk. It helps you to stand up straight after bending over.</li> </ul>
<b>Rectus abdominis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you bend forward, you use an abdominal muscle called the rectus abdominis and also known as the six pack muscle.</li> </ul>
<b>Oblique's</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your internal oblique and external oblique let you rotate or bend your trunk.</li> </ul>
<b>Transverse abdominis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The transverse abdominis, which wraps around the front and side of your trunk, stabilizes your pelvis.</li> </ul>
<b>Multifidus</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Multifidus in your back supports your spine.</li> </ul>
<b>Why support the core?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Core strength</b> is the development of the torso muscles that stabilize, align, and move the trunk of the body. Poor core strength can cause poor posture which can also affect gross motor and fine motor skills. Building strong core strength is the building blocks to strong foundation for the child.</li> <li>Keeping these muscles strong helps stabilize your body, support your spine and enhance overall fitness.</li> <li>Below are exercises to support core strength for each key stage.</li> </ul>

<b>Warm up prior to strengthening exercises (no more than 5 minutes) This is part of Safe Practice requirement.</b>
<p><b>1. Rotation of joints:</b>  <b>Work from top to bottom:</b>          Shoulders, arms, wrists, waist, knees and ankles.          Roll forward and backwards on each joint area, twist gently through the waist keeping head forward, feet at shoulder width and slight bend in the knees.          Squat down like sitting on a chair for the knees, straight back.</p>
<p><b>2. Stretches:</b>          Reach up high and onto tiptoes, slowly down as far as they can reach, no bouncing on their stretching.          Remind children about their breathing, breath in to stretch up and then breath out as they release the stretch, go slow and see if they can feel the muscles.          Touch shoulder blade with hand supporting elbow,          Lounges and sweeping the floor for lower muscles,          On hands and knees and stretch back like a cat move.</p>
<p><b>3. Raise heart rate: (Exercise depends on space within classroom)</b>          Steady jog on spot,          Jumping jacks, scissor runs          Burpees</p>

### Foundation stage:

### 1. Snake curls:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This is an adaptation of a tummy curl.

- Knees bent, feet flat on the ground.
- Put a beanbag between the knees to keep them together.
- Hands resting on thighs and curl up raising the head, sliding the hands up to the knees and as they hold this position for 3 to 4 seconds they hiss!
- Then release slowly back down.
- Emphasize slow movements, rather than fast jerky ones.



### 2. Tightrope walker:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

The child walks along a rope line (or drawn line) while balancing a beanbag on their head. You can make this fun by saying there are alligators in the water so don't step off the rope!

- Child stands up tall with bean bag flat on head.
- Slowly walks one foot into front of the other to the end of the rope.
- You can make this harder by placing cones either side so they have to bend slightly to touch the top of the cone.
- Walking heel to heel is much harder also and requires more core stability.



### 3. Crab walk:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

As crabs walk sideways, this is really tricky for children to do, so you can start off by asking the children to walk backwards for a short distance.

- Place a bean bag on their tummy and they need to keep it from falling off by not allowing their back to slump.
- This activity supports endurance, so set a short distance at first and then children can build on their distance too, but with the main focus to keep their tummy up as straight as possible with no slump.
- You can even set up coloured spots that they have to touch on instruction.



### 4. Leg lifts:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:



- Stand sideways behind a chair so the left hand is resting lightly on the back of the chair.
- Slowly lift the left leg, keeping the knee bent until the hip is bent 90 degrees.
- Hold it and then slowly lower the leg almost to the ground, but don't touch it.
- Raise again and repeat once or twice more and then repeat on the other leg.
- As children's endurance increases over time, they can complete more on one leg before they change over.
- Use the 'tummy punch trick' to support them in thinking about the core within their movement.

### 5. Making bridges:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This will strengthen the muscles around the hips and back, which are all part of the core.

- Keep knees and feet together whilst lifting the buttocks off the ground.
- Hold the bridge for several seconds and then release slowly back down to the ground, remember slowly is key, do not just drop.
- The adult can make this fun by driving toy vehicles through the bridges encouraging them to stay up longer, supporting their endurance.



### 6. Superman:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This exercise also supports back muscles.

- Lie on the floor on their tummy and stretch out their arms off the floor like superman so the upper chest comes up too.
- Can the children now lift arms and legs off the floor?
- Ensure they are walking slowly, not fast, as this will require more muscle control from the child.



## KS1: 6 core exercises

### 1. Bridge:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This pose activates the glutes to lift your hips. This trains your core while training your buttocks and thighs.

- Start on back. Bend your knees and plant your feet on the floor at hip width. Place hands at your sides, palms down.
- Tighten your core and glutes.
- Raise your hips until your knees are in line with your shoulders.
- Hold for 10-30 seconds.



### 2. Crunches:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

Crunches are a classic core-strengthening move. The act of lifting your upper body works your abdominal muscles.

- Start on the back. Bend knees and plant feet on the floor at hip width. Line up your head and spine. Cross your arms across your chest.
- Tighten your core and relax your neck and shoulders. Tuck in your chin and lift your upper back keeping your lower back, pelvis and feet on the floor. Pause.
- Slowly lower your upper back to return to the starting position.
- Start with 1 set of 8-12 reps.



### 3. Plank:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

The plank is a full body exercise that targets your core. It also strengthens your arms, shoulders, back, glutes and legs.

- Start on all fours, with your hands below your shoulders and your knees below your hips.
- Straighten your legs behind you, keeping your feet hip-width apart. Tighten your core.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- To make it easier, place knees on floor.



### 4. Supine Toe Tap:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

The Supine Toe Tap is a basic Pilates exercise. It engages your core muscles while working your glutes, hips and legs. Toe Taps also place minimal pressure on your spine.

- Start on your back. Lift your legs, knees bent to 90 degrees. Place your hands at your sides, palms down.
- Tighten your core. Lower your right foot and gently tap the floor, keeping your left leg still and your back flat.
- Raise your right leg to return to the starting position. Repeat. Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.



### 5. Bird Dog:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

The bird dog engages both your abdominal and back muscles, so it's an ideal core-strengthening move. It also challenges your coordination, balance and stability.

- Start on all fours, hands below your shoulders and knees below your hips.
- Tighten your core. Lift and straighten your right leg to hip level. Simultaneously lift and extend your left arm to shoulder level, palm down. Pause.
- Repeat with your left leg and right arm.
- Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.



## KS2: 6 core exercises

### 1. Mountain Climbers:

This exercise combines a plank with knee movements, so it's an excellent move for balance and core strength.

- Start in plank with your hands below your shoulders. Tighten your core.
- Lift your right knee toward your chest, keeping your back straight and hips down.
- Return your right leg to the starting position as your simultaneously lift your left knee toward your chest.
- Continue alternating legs. Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.



### 2. Warrior Crunch:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This crunch variation works your core and lower body, including your thighs, glutes and quads.

- Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width and your toes turned outward. Put your hands behind your head and open your chest.
- Tighten your core and glutes. Bend your knees until your thighs are parallel to the floor.
- Bend your torso to the side, moving your right elbow toward your right thigh. Repeat on the left side.
- Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.



### 3. Side plank with rotation:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This is an extension to the plank and can be simplified if necessary by not rotating and stretching arm upwards with balance. This exercise strengthens the arms, shoulders and oblique's by combining a side plank with arm movements.



- Lie on your right side with your right forearm below your shoulder. Extend your legs, left foot on top of right. Tighten your core.
- Lift your hips to form a straight line with your body. Raise your left arm straight up (this is the simplified version).
- Rotate your torso toward the floor and bring your left arm under your body.
- Rotate your torso and straighten your left arm to return to the starting position.
- Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.
- Repeat on the other side.

#### 4. Bicycle crunch:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This classic exercise strengthens your abs by placing them under constant tension.

- Start on your back. Bend your knees and plant your feet on the floor at hip width. Line up your head and spine. Place your hands behind your head, elbows pointing out to the side.
- Tighten your core and move your shoulders back and down. Bend your right knee toward your chest and extend your left leg, lifting it a few inches off the floor.
- Lift your left shoulder and upper back, bringing your left elbow toward your right knee.
- Tap your left shoulder on the floor and simultaneously switch your legs.
- Continue alternating elbows and knees, starting with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.



#### 5. Bird Dog with elbow to knee:

As part of Safe Practice, please ensure warm up takes place prior to exercises:

This variation on the basic bird dog incorporates fluid movement to engage your abs and back while improving core mobility.

- Start on all fours, hands below your shoulders and knees below your hips.
- Tighten your core. Lift and straighten your right leg to hip level. Simultaneously lift and extend your left arm to shoulder level, palm down.
- Bring your right knee and left elbow toward each other. Return to the starting position.
- Start with 1 set of 8 to 12 reps.
- Repeat on the other side.

