



words first

Speech. Language. Literacy. Communication.

Core Strengthening Information Pack and Home Programme



Is your child frequently and easily tired? Does your child's teacher report that he/she can't sit still, fidgets or lacks concentration? Does your child appear withdrawn during break time and shy away from playground games? Does your child have difficulty in standing while dressing, and prefers to sit or lie down?

This programme provides parents with practical and fun activities to help their child strengthen their core muscles, all in the comfort of their home environment.

What is your core?

Your core muscles are your deep, stabilising muscles which are meant to work at a low intensity for long periods of time. We can also call them your **postural muscles** as they help your body keep upright and stable. They lay the foundation on which your joints and other muscles can work efficiently. The common ones most people know about are your deep stomach muscles, the ones under your six pack. There are also core muscles that run along your spine, shoulders and pelvis.

Why is it important?

- A strong core is needed in order for you to carry out smooth coordinated movements
- Your core gives you postural control, i.e. good balance
- In order to perform fine motor activities, you need stability at your abdomen, shoulder and wrists
- To be able to jump and land safely or stop yourself from running without falling over.

What might you see if your child's core is weak?

- Inability to carry out fine motor tasks such as drawing, writing, cutting with a pair of scissors
- Poor posture at the table or in standing, always slumping or slouching
- Poor balance
- Uncoordinated when doing things like star or scissor jumps
- Sitting often
- Your child may tire easily
- Your child's teacher may report he/she can't sit still, fidgets, lacks concentration/focus

- Your child may appear withdrawn during break time and shy away from playground games
- Difficulty dressing in standing, prefers to sit or lie down.

The fast acting muscles very often overwork to try help out your core if it is weak. Many children with a weak core will have tight and short hamstrings as well as hunched up shoulders. This makes it even more difficult for them to sit upright.

Why are so many kids being "diagnosed" with a weak core?

Modern day living brings with it many demands. Parents may have less free time to play with their children, especially when you consider most families have two working parents.

An increase in screen time means less activity and play with movement.

Academic demands have increased and children are spending large portions of their day at a desk.

We have more information and research and therefore more children who are struggling are being picked up than before. Previously they may have been overlooked or seen as being lazy.

What can you do to help?

- Movement breaks during class, screen time or desk top activities
- Monitor screen time
- Active weekends
- Allow for free play and be aware of overscheduling our young kids.

Core Strengthening Home Programme

We don't want this to become a chore or something your child loathes. Ideas I have found to work is to play board games as a family and then before anyone can roll the dice they need to choose one of the exercises to do (one of the quick ones). Or use the exercises as a movement break (explained below). Or incorporate them into daily life – for example, while you wait for mom or dad to dish supper, you do 10 wall push ups.

With all of the below exercises, remember quality over quantity and always encourage your kids to keep taking deep breaths.



Sit ups

Can be done with a ball, soft toy, bean bag, roll of socks, etc.

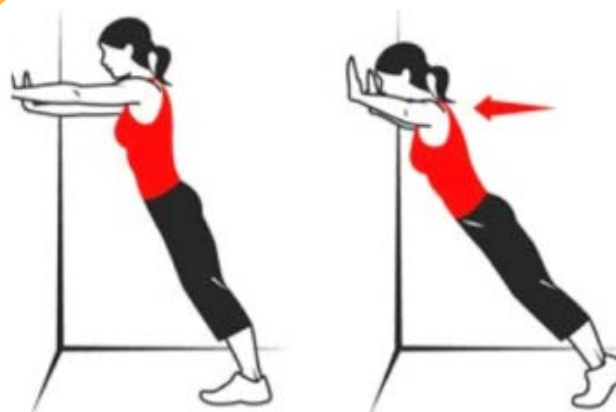


Plank



Leg lifts

Squeeze whatever object you used in the above exercises between your feet. Lift it up into the air and place behind your head. Careful when lowering your legs! Don't let them make a noise and wake up the fairies that live underground ;)



Wall push ups



Superman



Bridge

Make a bridge for your dolls to walk under or a tunnel for your cars to drive through.



Downward dog

Encourage heels to the ground and pushing into hands.

Animal Walks

How does a lion walk? How about an elephant? Be creative, have fun, be silly, make noise!



Dead bug

Crab Walk

1 | 2

Donkey Kick
3 times

1 | 2

Bear Walk
3 times

1 | 2

Snake Crawl
3 times

1 | 2



Penguin walks

Inch worm

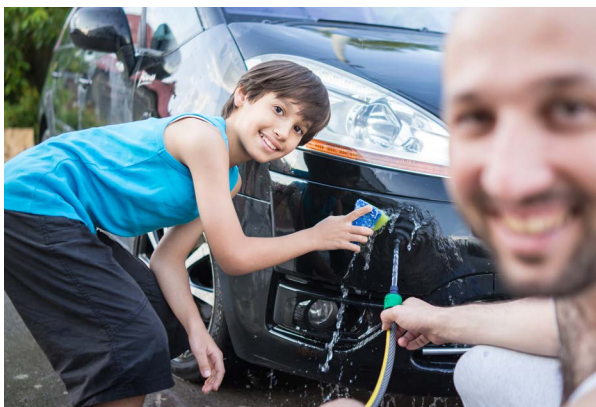
Walk forward with hands | Core tight, chest forward | Lift hips and walk legs in

Chores around the house

- Sweeping is great for activating core muscles around your tummy and shoulder. It also strengthens the muscles in your hands and fingers needed for gripping a pencil and works on hand eye coordination! Sweep soft toys across the carpet, rake up leaves outside



- Wash windows and sliding doors with scrunched up newspaper. Let them tear the newspaper, scunch it up, squeeze the Windowlens. It's all part of it and it's great for hand function as well as shoulder and core strength.
- Same goes for helping wash the car or scrubbing floors!



- Heavy lifting works the stabilising muscles around your tummy, shoulders and wrists. Give your kids tasks such as helping bring in the groceries, take out rubbish bag, help bring the big bin back in, move furniture, fetch their chair for dinner, push baby brother around in his pram, push their chair in after breakfast, and help fetch the laundry basket.



Standing on one leg

- Standing on one leg works on balance and stability around the hip joint
- Balancing small stuffed animals on the top of the foot and lifting them up into a laundry basket to "clean up".
- Same as above but picking up marbles or gem stones with toes and then placing into a container.
- Hop scotch
- Stand with one foot up on a ball and slowly roll it clockwise, counterclockwise, left and right, forward and backward.
- While standing place different coloured circles/beanbags/socks around her and get her to touch the colours with her one foot while you call out the colours.



With all of these activities, both legs need to have a turn to practice.

Breaking the rules at the park

- Stand on swing instead of sitting
- Rolling down the hill, now try roll up!
- Climb up the slide instead of down
- Swinging themselves instead of you pushing.

Birthday coming up?

A skateboard would be a great present!

- Your child can ride around the house on their tummy, using their arms to pull
- They can sit on it with a rope tied onto burglar bars to pull themselves along
- They can sit on it and use their heels to pull themselves along,
- While standing they can practise balancing on the carpet where the skateboard won't run away with them.



More fun core games

- Handstands against a wall or with a partner to practice
- Wheelbarrow races
- Somersaults
- Tug of war with a towel or sheet
- Twister

What is a movement break?

Every **20-35 minutes** your child should have a break from screen time activities or even a desk top activity. Sitting still and concentrating for long periods is difficult for a young child. Choose any one of the exercises above as a movement break. This will give him/her a chance to activate his/her postural muscles, "wake up" their muscles' tone and get oxygen flowing! It should also help with concentration as he/she gets older and will need to be at a desk for longer periods at school or when doing homework.

These activities are meant to be fun and a bonding activity between child and parent/siblings. Feel free to be silly and creative! Please contact Amanda at amanda@wordsfirst.co.uk for more information.