

# It's the core that matters

The term "core training" often prompts confusion. Every movement you make originates in the core, whether brushing your hair, pushing a grocery cart or running after the kids.

Your body's core is the midsection, from your groin to your shoulders. The core includes the pelvis, abs, back and chest muscles. It is this core that offers stability, balance and flexibility. If the core is not properly conditioned it will limit your physical abilities. Core training supplies a solid base for strength, stamina, correct posture and top form in most sports. Simply put, core training strengthens the muscles of the torso, pelvis, and back, allowing them to work together creating a strong physical foundation. From the power of that centre, the arms and legs can move fully and freely without additional strain. That's core strength.

The muscles involved start with the abdominals: the rectus abdominis — the "six pack"; the obliques — running diagonally toward the pubic bone; and the transverse abdominis — deep below the six-pack.

The back contains a crucial stabilizing musculature: the spinal erectors — dual muscular columns on either side of the spine; the trapezius and rhomboids — to stabilize the shoulder blades; and the latissimus dorsi — "lats" to you — which involve arm movement.

In the pelvic area, there are the hip flexors that allow you to raise your leg, as well as hip rotators. The hamstrings, abductors, and adductors provide an important pelvic-leg connection. And finally, there are the gluteals, which allow for powerful backward kicking —



**MARLA ARNDT**  
fitness bootcamp

and much, much more. The saying you are only as strong as your weakest link holds true in the case of your core.

Abdominals get all the credit for protecting the back and being the foundation of strength, but they are only a small part of what makes up the core.

In fact, it is weak and unbalanced core muscles that are linked to low back pain. Weak core muscles result in a loss of the appropriate lumbar curve and a swayback posture.

Stronger, balanced core muscles help maintain appropriate posture and reduce strain on the spine. Training the muscles of the core also corrects postural imbalances that can lead to injuries.

There are exercises and equipment available for core training. The most important exercises — in my opinion — are body-weight exercises. They are very effective for developing core strength, and can be done anywhere.

Bridges are a great example of a perfect core exercise. Here are three examples to try on a floor mat:

**Prone bridge:** In a prone position — face down — balance on the tips of the toes and elbows and maintain a straight line from your head to your feet. This makes the front and back muscles of the trunk work together.

**Lateral bridge:** In a sideways position, balance on one elbow and the side of one foot. This requires a co-ordination of the abs and the pelvis.

**Supine bridge:** Lying face up, raise the hips so that only the head, shoulders, and feet touch the mat. This strengthens the glutes.

Push ups, squats, hip lifts, lunges and back extensions are all great exercises to help develop a strong core.

**Using equipment:** A variety of exercise equipment is available that can be used to train the core. Some of the best products for developing core strength include medicine balls, kettle bells, stability balls, bosu balls, balance boards and dumbbells.

These types of fitness equipment create instability needed to engage the core muscles to maintain balance. They are challenging, fun but gentle. You will be amazed at how quickly you feel the muscles being used.

Pilates and yoga are two forms of exercise that will help develop core strength. The biggest benefit of core training is to develop functional fitness — that is, fitness that is essential to both daily living and regular activities.

Good core strength is important at every age and fitness level. Whatever your goals, find a way to incorporate body-core conditioning into your routine to reduce fatigue, avoid muscle strain and improve your strength and mobility.

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# New book revives the Dark Prince

The Associated Press

Long before Edward Cullen of the *Twilight* series and Bill Compton of HBO's *True Blood*, there was the original vampire, Bram Stoker's Prince Dracula, in the gothic horror novel *Dracula*.

Now, more than 100 years later, Dacre Stoker, the great-grandnephew of the famed Irish novelist, and Ian Holt, have written a sequel, *Dracula: The Un-Dead*.

The sequel begins in 1912, 24 years later, and it revisits original characters Mina and Jonathan Harker, Dr. Jack Seward, Arthur Holmwood and famed vampire hunter Dr. Abraham Van Helsing.

The Harkers' marriage has been strained since Mina was seduced by the Dark Prince. Her youthful appearance and insatiable sexual appetite — conditions of the blood exchange — serve as a constant reminder of her betrayal.

Concern mounts for the Harkers' son, Quincey, as he pursues a career in the theatre against his father's wishes. He is mentored by a mysterious Romanian actor.

Seward, now a morphine addict, and Holmwood, who is stranded in a marriage of convenience, still pine for their lost love, Lucy Westenra.

The sequel offers an alternate explanation for Lucy's death, casting doubt on Dracula's involvement.

Actual events and historical figures are woven into this work of fiction, which puts a new spin on the Jack the Ripper murders and incorporates Elizabeth Bathory, the 16th-century Hungarian countess accused of killing hundreds of women. It was said that Bathory bathed in the blood of virgins to retain her youth.

Dacre pays homage to Bram by casting him as a character in the sequel and making the original novel a focal point of the story.

One may wonder whether Bram would have approved of the contemporary Dracula, who has been reinvented as a romantic hero.

The sequel stands on its own, without the original novel, and opens the possibility of a third book by Dacre.

# horoscope Saturday

## SATURDAY BIRTHDAY

This year, you tend to focus on goals and then manifest them. Your communication and networking skills continue to increase, which proves to be a great benefit. If you cannot connect with a person in one way, try another. Trust that you will find the path. Neighbours and relatives play an unusual role in this year. If you are single, you don't need to go out of your way to meet someone special. Trust that it will happen. If you are attached, go out to dinner more often together. Find reasons to go out on a date. Capricorn understands you.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19)** — You might have to be more present than you normally choose to be. Realize where all this involvement is taking you. Make plans with a dear friend who illuminates your imagination.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20)** — Your willingness to reach out for someone at a distance bridges the gap more than you realize. Make plans, if possible, to meet each other halfway. Open doors rather than close them, even if you're irritated.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20)** — Examine the possibilities that exist between you and another person. You might wonder why you are in a particular situation and why you have made certain choices. Ironing out a problem requires letting go of a need to control others.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22)** — Listen to suggestions and consider an invi-

tation. Is it more important to be with this person? Or is it more important to do what you want? From this base, do what is right for you. Honour your needs.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)** — Complete necessary projects and get a job done. You are on top of your game no matter what, but you'll want to clear out as much as you can. A change of pace will be welcomed and will be the result of what you are doing.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)** — Though it might be a little scary, following your imagination also can be fun. Others love when your creative side bubbles up. In this mood, many walk toward you. They want to enjoy this part of your personality.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)** — Take time to slow down and enjoy those in your immediate environment. How you deal with someone and the choices you make could be quite dynamic if you slow down and look at your options. Sometimes knee-jerk responses don't work.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)** — Your ability to move past the obvious conclusion helps you when others challenge your ideas. The real trick is not to trigger and just note what is going on. Someone has a lot to share, in any case.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)** — You easily could go overboard, and probably in the area where you have the least willpower. No one is making you do anything. Be careful, as you might not be

realistic about what is going on.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)** — Others naturally respond to your suggestions. Now just might be the time to ask for that raise or wish that you have been longing for. You have every chance of hitting a home run. A change in procedures is a necessity.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)** — Much goes on behind the scenes that needs to be acknowledged, even if it is quietly. You know what works and where you are heading. Gain insight rather than act. Your listening skills do come into play.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)** — Surround yourself with friends and people. You don't need to know everyone, but you are simply happiest among crowds and friends. Stay focused on a long-term goal or desire.

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# Mockingbird actress dies

The Associated Press

**HIGHLANDS, N.C.** — Actress Collin Wilcox-Paxton, who portrayed the false accuser in the movie classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*, died of brain cancer just months after the diagnosis. She was 74.

Her husband, Scott Paxton, confirmed Thursday that she died Oct. 14 in Highlands, N.C.

Wilcox-Paxton played Mayella Ewell, a young white woman who falsely accuses a black man of beating and raping her.

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**Guelph Mercury**