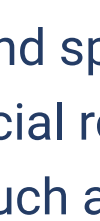


# Core Exercises for Seniors: Build Strength and Improve Stability



Author: **Amie Clark** | April 14, 2022

Share: [!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(1ef1ef0bf9af6c6996401964cf280f2d\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(e9a80c8557f9285916925bd4ac40fff5\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(88e2edecff3400e68a80dd08c57d2f9c\_img.jpg\)](#)

JUMP TO SECTION

Most of your body's movement relies on your core, a group of 29 muscles that stabilize the pelvis and spine, providing support for your legs and upper body. The core plays a crucial role in everything from breathing and [balance](#) to everyday activities such as household chores, personal hygiene, and going for a walk.

In this guide, we'll discuss everything you need to know about strengthening your core, including the benefits of core exercise, how long it takes to see improvement, and step-by-step directions for safe and senior-friendly core exercises.

## Benefits of Core Exercises for Seniors

A strong core is a critical part of senior wellness, and incorporating core [exercises](#) into your fitness routine has several advantages.

### Preventing Injuries

Core workouts aid in the development and maintenance of a strong core. When you have a strong core, your other muscles don't have to compensate and you avoid injuries related to over-extension. Core exercises also prevent back pain and spinal issues such as disc herniation.

The stronger your core muscles are, the more protected your inner organs and central nervous system are too. Most importantly, older adults who develop a strong core [reduce their risk of falls](#), which are responsible for more than [32,000 older adult deaths](#) annually.

### Improved Wellness

Since aging generally reduces muscle capacity and function, it's crucial to your overall health that you take steps to combat this loss. Participating in regular core-fitness activities increases independence by improving your overall ability to stay active as you age. Physical therapy researchers witnessed improvement in the ability of their older adult subjects to complete typical daily tasks like housework following just [20 minutes of core training](#) three times per week.

### Why You Should Avoid Crunches and Sit-Ups

Sit-ups and crunches were go-to core exercises for decades. Now, however, fitness experts consider these activities hazardous and ineffective, and a multitude of medical research backs them up. These exercises pose a risk for individuals of all ages because of the high frequency of neck injuries and back injuries associated with them. People who do sit-ups and crunches using proper form rarely experience injuries, but most people simply don't know how to do them properly.

Regardless of correct or incorrect form, many doctors recommend that individuals over 65 do not engage in crunches or sit-ups. Some experience neck and back issues, but the most serious concern stems from numerous reported incidents of older adults triggering a [stroke](#) while performing crunches or sit-ups.

## 9 Core-Strengthening Exercises

In this section, we'll identify nine senior-friendly core exercises and offer step-by-step directions for correctly performing each. None of these exercises require any equipment other than a household chair.

### Bridges

Bridges build strength in your hamstrings and glutes while boosting core stability. This exercise does not require any equipment, but you may want to invest in a fitness or [yoga mat](#) to make the floor work more comfortable. Include bridges in your workout routine around twice a week.

To perform bridge exercises:

- Assume a prone position with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Keep your arms at your sides and your back straight without tilting your hips.
- Tighten your abdominal and buttocks muscles.
- Lift your hips off the floor until they're aligned with your knees and shoulders.
- Hold this pose for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position, and complete 10 repetitions.

### Planks

Planks are a simple, effective exercise that requires little time but can yield impressive results. It takes a lot of work to do planks correctly, however, and it may feel challenging until your muscles become stronger.

Here's how you can achieve a correct plank position:

- Start in a push-up position on the floor.
- Bend your elbows 90 degrees, and place your weight on your forearms.
- Make a straight line from the top of your head to your toes, free from arching or bending.
- Keep your head relaxed and look at the floor.
- Hold this position for at least five seconds while breathing steadily. If your form starts to suffer, then stop.
- Remember, planks are only beneficial when you have proper form.

Practice planks two to four times a week, increasing your time in the position as you feel comfortable.

If you can't do a traditional plank, try a modified plank:

- Begin on your hands and knees.
- Tighten your core and lower your torso onto your forearms, keeping your shoulders aligned squarely over your elbows and your feet in the air behind you.
- Maintain a straight back and a form that resembles a plank as much as possible.
- Hold the position for five to 10 seconds, and then return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.

### Opposite Arm and Leg Raise

The opposite arm and leg raise strengthens the lumbar and abdominal muscles. It requires no equipment, but a yoga mat or something similar may be more comfortable than a hard floor. Include opposite arm and leg raises in your fitness regime two or three times per week.

To perform opposite arm and leg raises:

- Crouch down on all fours.
- Reach your right arm forward and extend your left leg back, flexing your foot.
- Hold your position for five seconds, then relax.
- Remember to keep your back, arms, and legs straight.
- Repeat using the left arm and right leg. Perform five to 15 repetitions.

### Seated Side Bends

Seated side bends require a chair and can be done every other day. This exercise stretches the obliques, intercostals, serratus anterior, and triceps, in addition to opening the hips and improving posture.

To perform a seated side bend:

- Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- Raise your right arm in a reaching motion above your head while bending your upper body to the left.
- Keep your upper body facing forward. You should feel the muscles stretch from your lower back to your shoulders.
- Hold your position for 20 seconds. Switch arms and repeat, bending the other direction this time.

### Seated Leg Lifts

For seated leg lifts, you'll need a chair. Plan to do these lifts two to four times per week on nonconsecutive days. If you already have a fitness routine that involves leg days at the gym, then simply add this exercise to your leg days.

To perform seated leg lifts:

- Sit up straight in your chair with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Extend your right leg while staying upright.
- Lift your extended leg as high as you are capable of without losing your posture or removing your other foot from the floor.
- Keep in mind that slouching or leaning back makes this exercise futile.
- Repeat this motion 10 times with each leg.

### Seated Leg Taps

Here's how to perform seated leg taps, an exercise that targets the abs:

- Sit upright on a chair with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Hold the seat bottom for support, and tighten your abdominal area while extending both legs in front of you.
- Remain in this position and tap the floor with both feet.
- Pull your legs under the chair and place your feet flat on the floor to recenter yourself.
- Relax, and then repeat when you feel able, up to 10 times.

### Seated Half Roll-Backs

Seated half roll-backs, a Pilates exercise you can perform daily, do not require any equipment. Still, you may prefer a floor mat for comfort. This exercise works your abdominal muscles and improves the flexibility of your spine.

Here's how you do it:

- Sit on the floor with your knees bent and your feet flat on the ground.
- Hold your arms in front of your chest with your hands clasped together, creating a circle.
- Sitting up straight, slowly bend your back toward the mat until you reach your mid-back.
- Scoop your abdominal area with your arms as you move backward and tuck your head toward your chest. This should create a C-shaped form.
- Roll back up to the starting position, and repeat the motion 10 times.
- Remember to keep your feet flat on the floor for the entire exercise.

### Seated Half Roll-Up

Seated half roll-ups strengthen the spine and abdominals without any need for equipment.

Here's how you do a seated half roll-up:

- Start by sitting on the edge of your chair with your legs stretched straight out in front of you.
- Keep your heels on the ground, and flex your toes upward.
- Keep your hands on your legs or allow them to hang at your side. Take a deep breath in, finding length in your spine.
- Breathe out and bend forward at your hips, leaning your chest down toward the ground and keeping length in your spine. Try to articulate each vertebra.
- Once your head meets your legs, hold the position for a few seconds then relax.
- Return to your starting position and complete 10 more repetitions.

## Superman

The Superman exercise is an excellent tool for individuals with lower back pain, and it can be performed almost anywhere and does not require any equipment. Include the Superman exercise in your fitness routine two or three times a week.

Here's how to perform it:

- While lying on your stomach, extend your arms directly out in front of you.
- Raise both your arms and legs 4 to 5 inches simultaneously to form a bowl shape with your body.
- Hold this position for 10 seconds. If you're doing it right, expect to feel your lower back, glutes, and hamstrings working.
- Complete three sets of 10 repetitions.

To learn more about our favorite exercises for seniors, check out our other helpful guides.

- [Stretching Exercises for Seniors](#)
- [Best Ellipticals for Seniors](#)
- [Best Recumbent Bikes for Seniors](#)
- [Best Exercise Equipment for Seniors](#)
- [Best Bicycles for Seniors](#)
- [Best Treadmills for Seniors](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions

Can you perform core exercises daily?

How can seniors strengthen their core?

How can an older person get a flat stomach?

What are three exercises that strengthen the core?

What is the most effective core exercise?

What is the fastest way to strengthen your core?