6 Simple Exercises to Strengthen Your Core

Maintaining strength in your arms and legs is essential, but it is important not to forget about your core. Strong abdominal and back muscles will allow you to carry out everyday tasks such as lifting a 20-pound box, moving furniture and putting away groceries. As you strengthen your core, you are working to ensure safety in your day-to-day activities, as well as decreasing risk for potential injury.

The following describes and illustrates 6 simple exercises to help strengthen your back and core muscles within the comfort of your own home. The short routine should only take approximately 15 minutes, and should be completed 3-4 times a week.
**Move 1: Knee Fold Tuck**

(A) Sit tall, hands on floor, knees bent, squeezing a playground ball between them. (B) Lift knees so shins are about parallel to the floor; extend arms. Pull knees toward shoulders, keeping upper body still. Bring knees back to starting position. Repeat 15 to 20 times.
Move 2: Climbing Rope

(A) Sit with legs extended, feet turned out in a V position, toes pointed. Contract core muscles and roll spine into a C-curve. (B) Lift arms and move them as if you were climbing a rope. Twist slightly with each reach. Do 20 reaches with each arm.
**Move 3: Side Balance Crunch**

(A) Begin with left knee and left hand on the floor, right arm straight up. Extend right leg so your body forms a straight line. (B) Pull right knee toward torso and right elbow toward knee. Straighten arm and leg. Repeat 10 times, then switch sides.
Move 4: Circle Plank
Start in a plank position with abs tight. (A) Pull right knee in and circle it clockwise, then (B) counterclockwise. Keep the rest of your body stationary. Repeat five times, then switch legs.
Move 5: Sliding Pike

(A) Begin in a plank on an uncarpeted floor, hands under shoulders and a towel under feet. (B) With legs straight, raise hips and draw legs toward hands into a pike position—your feet should slide easily. Hold for one count, then return to start. Repeat 10 times.
Move 6: Oblique Reach

Sit with knees bent and feet on floor. (A) Straighten right leg. Roll spine into a C-curve. Place left hand behind head and extend right arm. (B) Twist body to the left, roll back a bit more (and hold for one count), then come up. Do five reps, then switch sides.