

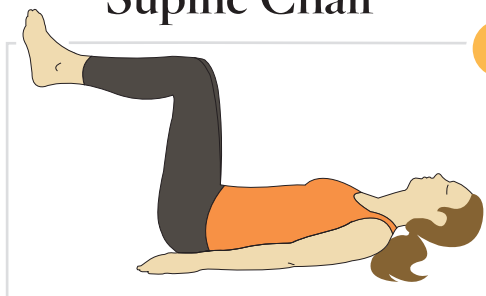


## 5 YOGA POSES TO strengthen your core

✦ WRITTEN BY SHAWN RADCLIFFE ✦ ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIZ LANE

Building a strong core is about more than just working on your six-pack abs. Your core also includes the muscles of the lower back, the sides of the torso, the hips and pelvis. While you could easily find dozens of yoga poses that focus on the core, these five provide the strength and endurance you need to move efficiently and avoid injuries.

### Supine Chair



#### WHAT IT DOES:

Like the standing version of this pose, holding a chair while on your back builds awareness of the core muscles. "It's a static movement, but it's really powerful," says yoga instructor Katy Henderson, founder of Studio South in Williamsburg, Va.

#### WORK THE CORE:

Pull your stomach in and up as you exhale. As you inhale, let the stomach muscles soften slightly.

### Side Plank

VASISTHASANA



#### WHAT IT DOES:

"Stabilizing is a great way to strengthen core muscles," says yoga teacher Biz Magarity, co-founder of Nava Yoga Center in Philadelphia, Pa. Doing side plank smoothly requires you to use all of the core muscles, not just the abs.

#### WORK THE CORE:

For beginners, Magarity recommends "balancing on the forearm instead of the hand, in order to draw the awareness to the core muscles." For more, try placing the sole of your top foot on the inner thigh of the other leg or holding a yoga block between your thighs.



## Boat

NAVASANA

### WHAT IT DOES:

Boat is a classic core pose that targets the lower abs, the hip flexors and the muscles of the spine. "Avoid jumping right into the full expression of the pose," says Magarity, "because it is so easy to go for the final pose and end up with bad alignment and restricted breath."

### WORK THE CORE:

Engage the abdominal muscles as you exhale, and relax them slightly as you inhale. Also, don't let the lower back round.



## Bridge

SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

### WHAT IT DOES:

Bridge pose not only strengthens the core muscles, but will also stretch the lower abdominal and hip flexor muscles.

### WORK THE CORE:

If you find yourself clenching the buttocks, lower the hips slightly until you can relax the muscles of the bottom. Or try supporting your hips with a yoga block. "Do this with the block on the highest height that is comfortable," says Magarity, "in order to feel a nice stretch of the lower abdominals and hip flexor muscles."



## Extended Side Angle

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

### WHAT IT DOES:

Extended side angle strengthens and stretches the muscles of the side of the torso. Because it's a standing pose, you will also work the muscles of the legs and hips.

### WORK THE CORE:

For a less intense version, cross your arms over your chest and bring the side of your torso toward your thigh. To work the core more, says Henderson, "lift your bottom arm up and reach through both, so you have to ignite both obliques," keeping your arms parallel to the line formed by your torso. 📺