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Pediatric core strengthening exercises

Here are some simple core strengthening exercises for kids that make it fun! Why is building strong core muscles essential? Because it's the foundation for many developmental skills and helps with balance, coordination, and overall body strength. Many kids have weak core muscles due to various reasons such as decreased physical activity, increased screen time, or developmental delays. To help strengthen these muscles, we issue a challenge and give activities a playful purpose! Here are some of our best exercises to get you started. Playtime becomes workout time with these fun core-strengthening activities for kids: - ****Bridge Challenge****: Help your child walk small toys under a bridge without collapsing it. You can even add a bunny to squish by mistake! - ****Superman Lifts****: Have them lie on their stomach and lift their arms up, like the superhero. Make it harder by adding legs or a ball to hold. Try it on a swing or large ball for extra fun. - ****Knock Me Over****: Sit with your child on your lap and bounce up and down until they fall over. Gradually increase the pressure needed to knock them down. Even getting back up is part of the core workout! - ****Plank Challenge****: Have them hold a plank position, then push up into a raised push-up position. Change it up by holding their forearms or lifting an arm and leg while in plank pose. For young ones to develop properly, they need space to move around. Their tummies must get some exercise too! Tummy Time is a must for them as it helps stretch their abdominal muscles and strengthen the neck and back muscles. This will help them master various skills like crawling, walking, jumping, skipping, and many more! Learn more about the importance of Tummy Time and discover fun toys that'll make it enjoyable for your little one. Some children love to move in unique ways – like wheelbarrow walking! Hold their knees or ankles while they walk their hands forward 10 steps and backward 10 steps. Can they balance a ball on their hand and put it into a basket? How long can they hold this position without getting tired? To mix things up, try these ideas: place an object on their back and see if they can get it across the room without it falling off; have them tap a balloon while walking; or even complete a puzzle from this position. For a big challenge, try wheelbarrow walking in front of a few steps! Core strengthening is not just for adults – kids need it too! While exercises like those mentioned above are great for targeting core muscles specifically, regular play activities can be just as beneficial. Here are some fun ideas that'll hit those core muscles: swimming, negotiating obstacle courses, climbing up slides, swinging, crab walking, or even playing tug of war. Some awesome toys and games to help strengthen your child's core include Core Exercise Cards for Kids by Super Duper, T Stool, Scooter boards, Rody, Spooner Board, and Upper Body and Core Strength Cards. Find all our best resources on core strengthening below: The Core Strengthening Handbook, The Core Strengthening Exercise Program, and Core Strengthening Activities for Kids. A strong core is essential for kids to master various gross motor skills like sitting, crawling, standing, walking, or jumping. Pediatric physical therapist NAPA shares some fantastic core exercises for kids that can even help those with cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. These exercises are vital for a child's development and will make it easier for them to complete everyday tasks. To help your child develop gross motor skills, try these exercises: Easy: Help your child come up to sitting from lying down by providing support at their trunk. Medium: If your child is already sitting on the floor, provide similar support as before. For a harder challenge, place your hands at their low trunk or upper thighs and offer minimal assistance during transition to sitting. Hard: Sit on the floor with your child and help them get up to sitting by providing stability and minimal assistance. They can use one hand for support if needed. Sitting balance reactions on a therapy ball or dynamic surface is another great way to work on core strengthening and righting reactions. If you don't have such surfaces, try this exercise while sitting on your legs. Easy: Sit with your child on a dynamic surface or ball and provide slow movements in different directions, waiting for them to engage their trunk and bring themselves back up to sitting. Harder: Hold your child lower down at their trunk or pelvis and complete quick or unexpected movements in each direction, waiting for them to bring themselves back up to sitting before moving on to the next repetition. Crawling is a great exercise for core strengthening and shoulder stabilizers. You can start with crawling across a flat surface and make it harder by constructing an obstacle course with couch cushions, ramps, and stairs. Bonus: Add a tunnel to your obstacle course, and your child will love it! Tall kneeling is another way to engage trunk stabilizers and work on balance reactions in a modified upright position. Start by playing in tall kneeling at a surface with assistance if needed. Make it harder by removing support at the arms and transitioning from heel sitting to tall kneeling. Hard: Try tall kneeling independently with stand-by assistance, and incorporate catch and throw with your child to work on hand-eye coordination. Other ideas include lying on your back with a cross-body reach towards your foot or sitting on a pillow and reaching for a toy behind you. The Importance of Core Strength in Children For young children, core strength is a crucial aspect of overall development. It involves the muscles of the abdomen, spine, and pelvis, which serve as a stable base for movement throughout the day. Engaging your child in activities that promote weight shifting, such as walking on their knees, can help strengthen their core and improve balance, coordination, and posture. Additionally, incorporating playtime into physical therapy sessions can make therapy more enjoyable and effective. At NAPA Center, we take an individualized approach to therapy, understanding that each child is unique with specific needs. Our customized programs are tailored to meet the unique requirements of your child's needs and your family's goals. Core strength should be developed from infancy through childhood, as it lays the foundation for more advanced motor skills like walking, running, sitting in a chair, jumping, and throwing a ball. Weak core muscles can lead to issues such as fatigue during physical activity, poor posture, balance problems, and delays in gross motor development. By recognizing these signs of weak core strength, you can take steps to support your child's development. With the right approach and therapy, children can develop strong cores and achieve independence in their daily activities. Given article text here motor skill development Children often develop motor skills through physical activity, but sometimes they may experience pain in the back, legs, or feet. To help your child strengthen their core, try introducing these exercises into their routine: To activate your child's core correctly, remind them to squeeze their belly and keep their back straight. Sometimes, gently "tickling" their belly can show them how to properly engage their core muscles. Start with short sessions and gradually increase the duration as they become more comfortable. Try activities that are fun and engaging, such as crawling, climbing, or swinging. You can also set up an obstacle course using couch cushions or chairs/blankets. As your child becomes stronger, you can add new challenges to keep them engaged. If your child is struggling with motor skills or shows significant delays, consult with their pediatrician for guidance and referral to a physical or occupational therapist. 1. Start by giving your child a wheelbarrow and have them walk while holding onto you for support. As they get better, let go slowly so they can balance on their own. 2. Have your child stand with their feet shoulder-width apart and then gently push them to one side while they try to stay upright. You can play catch with a playground ball while tossing it overhead each time. Another game, called Turn and Pass, requires two people to sit back-to-back on a therapy ball and pass a small ball around front and back three times before switching directions. The Kick and Pass exercise involves kicking a ball back and forth with a partner while sitting on the therapy ball. To strengthen your core in standing, try Ball Wall Squats by placing a ball against the wall behind you during squats. Alternatively, stand on one foot and place the other on top of a ball to roll it back and forth while keeping your core muscles engaged. You can also play catch with an overhead pass or perform Ball Cross Overs by holding a ball over one shoulder and reaching across to tap it on the floor near your foot. These exercises are based on research from Au et al. (2014). For more information, check out pediatric core strengthening activities and handbooks like The Core Strengthening Handbook, which includes 50+ activities for kids with equipment, play ideas, and details about why core strengthening is important. Additionally, explore towel activities to strengthen the core or postural exercises like Painting.