

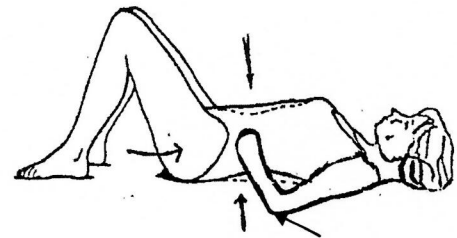
Active Balanced Posture: 4-Step Deep Layer Core Contraction

Purpose: The core is where the body's center of gravity is located and where all movement begins. A strong, efficient core is necessary for building and maintaining proper muscle balance and posture throughout the entire body.

- Instructions:**
1. These exercises should be pain-free. You will feel a deep sense of fatigue after completion.
 2. Hold all 4 contractions for **10 seconds, and repeat 10 times**. Once you can perform this easily, you will be ready to progress to performing movements while you hold the contractions, but you must master the 4-step deep layer contraction first.
 3. **Goal is to hold 5 minutes, 3-5x/day** while incorporating into daily, functional activities, such as sitting, standing, lifting your child or laundry basket, vacuuming, etc.

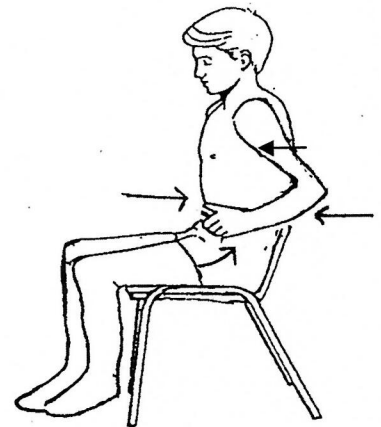
Step 1: Pelvic Floor Contraction (Kegel Exercise)

- Performed in sitting, supine (lying on back) with knees bent, quadruped (on hands and knees), & standing.
- Lightly contract the muscle as if you were going to cut off the flow of urine midstream.
- Do not perform a maximal contraction, only contract at 50% – pretend your pelvic floor is an elevator, contract slightly for the first floor, and a little harder for the second floor, and a maximal contraction for the third floor. For the exercise, stop at the second floor (or 50%) contraction and hold, then move to step #2.
 - Avoid squeezing your buttocks together, squeezing your legs, tilting your pelvis, or holding breath.



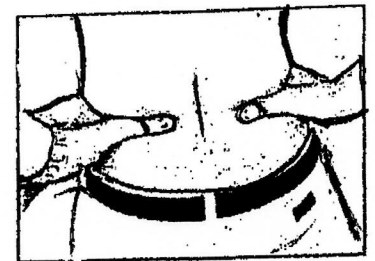
Step 2: Lower Abdominal (Transversus Abdominis) Contraction

- Can best be performed in quadruped (on hands and knees); but can also be performed in standing, sitting, and supine with knees bent.
- While maintaining your pelvic floor contraction, draw in or pull your lower abdomen in and up toward your spine (bringing your belly button toward your spine), or think of drawing your abs in and away from the elastic of your pants.
- You can feel this contraction by pressing your fingers just inside of your front hip bones.
 - Avoid tilting your pelvis, holding your breath, using your upper abs, or sucking in your stomach.



Step 3: Spinal (Multifidus) Contraction

- Can best be performed in prone (lying on stomach); but can also be performed in sitting and quadruped (on hands and knees).
- While maintaining your pelvic floor contraction **and** your lower abdominal contraction, swell your back muscles by squeezing them together.
- Imagine the muscles along your spine are your buttocks. Gently squeeze your "back buttocks" together.
- You can feel this contraction by wrapping your hands around your rib cage with your thumbs placed on either side of your spine.
- If you are having difficulty, you can lightly push your fingertips into your thighs to assist.
 - Avoid extending your back (leaning back), tilting pelvis, or holding your breath.



Step 4: Scapular Retraction

- Can be performed sitting, standing, supine and prone.
- Bring your ears over your shoulders into balanced posture.
- While maintaining your pelvic floor, lower abdominal and spinal contractions, squeeze your shoulder blades down and together.
 - Avoid holding your breath or shrugging your shoulders.

