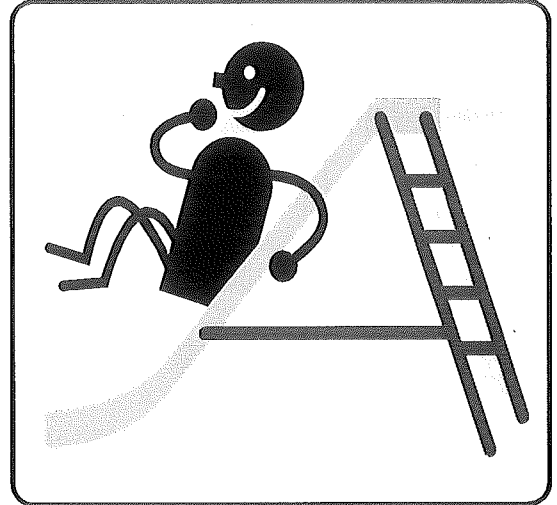


10 Ways to Strengthen the Core Muscles through Play

In simplistic terms, the core muscles include the muscles of the trunk. The core muscles help us to breath properly, maintain proper posture and provides a solid base of support so that we can move the body and extremities in any direction. Here are 10 ways to strengthen the core muscles through play:



- 1. Skipping:** When we skip, the core muscle are working on over drive. We need to lift the legs, twist the trunk and extend the back. Try to exaggerate the skipping motions, kicking very high and twisting left/right to increase the work out.
- 2. Kicking a ball:** The core muscle have to stay tight to lift the leg, maintain balance and generate the force needed to kick the ball.
- 3. Throwing a ball overhead:** Hold a large ball over your head with two hands. Play catch with a friend keeping your belly and back muscles tight.
- 4. Using playground equipment:** Climb up ladders and jungle gyms. Practice pumping a swing. The core muscles need to maintain a solid base of support while the arms and legs move in opposite directions.
- 5. Monkey bars:** You might think the monkey bars are all arms but the trunk needs to be activated to keep the shoulders in motion and to stabilize the lower body.
- 6. Climbing up a slide and sliding back down on the belly:** If the child is alone at the playground, work on climbing up the slide and sliding back down on the belly (feet first). To climb up a slide, the child has to assume a "bear walk" type position encouraging core muscle work in the belly and then when the child slides down the back muscles need to be working to keep the head and neck upright.
- 7. Crawling games:** Crawling is a simple activity to encourage activation of the core muscles. Play tag crawling on the ground, crawl through tunnels or crawl up the stairs.
- 8. Statues:** Make your body into a statue. Hold the position for as long as you can.
- 9. Freeze Dance:** Turn on some music and dance. When the music stops, the child must hold the body frozen in position until the music turns on again.
- 10. Scooterboard activities:** Playing games on a scooterboard on the belly or in sitting activates the core muscles.