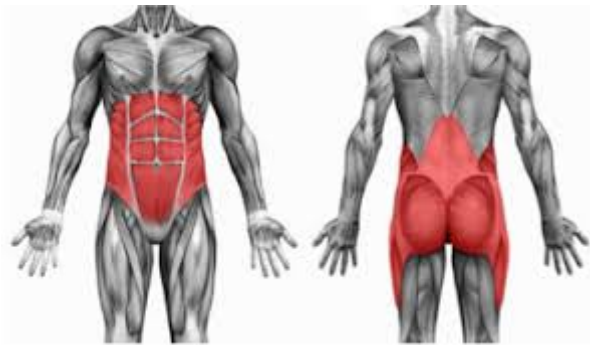# Developing Your Swimming Core

What Is Your Swimming Core?

The major core muscles

A swimmer's major core muscles are those in their abdomen, obliques (side muscles), lower back and glutes (buttocks).

Why Is Your Swimming Core So Important?

- A developed swimming core provides the swimmer with a number of distinct advantages:

1) Aligning The Body Position

A developed swimming core ensures the swimmer's body is supported, stabilized and balanced.

- This enables the swimmer's body position to be correctly aligned, helping them to reduce drag and perform many swimming drills and skills more effectively.

2) Streamlining

A developed core is especially useful when streamlining

3) Injury Prevention

A supported, stabilized and balanced body, reduces the stress and strain on a swimmer's muscles and joints.

- **This can significantly reduce the risk of injury**

4) Range Of Movement

A developed swimming core provides the swimmer with a greater range of movement.

- This can be especially useful when they are rotating the shoulders, trunk and hips during the freestyle and backstroke strokes

5) Power

A developed swimming core helps to generate the explosive power a swimmer needs for starts, turns and underwater dolphin kicking.

6) Endurance

A developed swimming core enables greater propulsion to be generated by the swimmer's arms and legs.

- This combined with an improved body position can enable the swimmer to increase their swimming endurance.

Developing Your Swimming Core In The Pool

There are a number of ways in which a swimmer can develop their swimming core in the pool, such as.

1)Flutter Kicking

The freestyle and backstroke flutter kick is an easy and effective way of developing a swimmer's core.

2)Dolphin Kicking

Underwater dolphin kicking can help develop a swimmer's core

Both the dolphin kicking as used in butterfly and underwater dolphin kicking used during the underwater phase-in starts and turns are also easy and effective ways of developing a swimming core.

3)Vertical Kicking

Either flutter or dolphin vertical kicking in deeper water, are also effective ways of developing a swimming core.

4)Treading Water

Treading water is an often overlooked but effective way of developing a swimming core in the pool.

How To Engage Your Swimming Core

Engaging your swimming core muscles ensures they are correctly aligned, to help support and perform certain swimming drills and skills effectively.

- To engage their core, swimmers should continue to breathe normally.
- They should then tighten/contract their stomach muscles while drawing their navel towards their spine.

How To Develop Your Swimming Core At Home

Many of the world's top swimmers regularly spend time developing their swimming core as a part of their land/dryland training programme.

- Listed below are five basic, but effective swimming core development exercises, that any swimmer can perform at home.

1) Sit-Ups

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The swimmer should then slowly raise their trunk until their elbows touch their knees.

2)The Plank.

Beginners should aim to hold this position for twenty to thirty seconds.

This is the classic core strength exercise. It helps strengthen most of the important swimming core muscles.

How to perform the plank:

- The swimmer should lie on the floor on their front (prone).
- They should support themselves on their forearms and raise their head, so their face is facing forwards.
- Swimmers should ensure they keep their elbows directly below their shoulders.

- **They should then slowly raise their trunk and legs parallel to the floor, supported by their forearms and toes.**
- **Swimmers should ensure that they lower their heads into a neutral position, tighten their abdominals, straighten their backs and tighten their glutes to achieve a body position that is parallel to the floor.**
- **Beginners should aim to hold this position for twenty to thirty seconds.**
- **Swimmers should ensure they maintain a regular breathing pattern.**

3)Superman

Superman is a great swimming core exercise for developing the shoulder muscles, the back muscles and the glutes

How to perform the superman:

- The swimmer should lay on the floor on their front (prone) with their arms straight above their head.
- They should then engage their core.
- The swimmer should then raise their left arm, while at the same time raising their right leg.
- They should hold this position for a three-second, before slowly returning to the starting position.
- The swimmer should now repeat this exercise but this time by raising their left arm and right leg.

4)The Hip/Glute Bridge

This is an excellent core exercise for developing the hip flexors, hamstrings, glutes and lower abdominals.

How to perform the hip/glute bridge:

- **The swimmer should lie on the floor on their back (supine).**

- They should raise their knees while keeping the soles of their feet on the floor.
- They should keep their arms on the floor, by their sides, parallel to their body.
- The swimmer then should raise their hips off the floor, until their thighs, abdomen and chest are in a straight line.
- They should hold this position for ten to fifteen seconds.
- They should then slowly lower their hips back to the floor.

5)Straight Leg Flutter Kicks

The swimmer's legs should remain straight, with their toes pointed throughout this exercise.

Straight leg flutter kicks are a great core development exercise for the core and glutes

How to perform straight leg flutter kicks

- The swimmer should lay on the floor on their back (supine) with their arms straight by their sides and their hands under their butt.
- They should raise their legs approximately 6 inches (15cms) off the ground.
- They should then engage their core.
- Their legs should remain straight, with their toes pointed throughout this exercise.
- The swimmer performs small flutter kicks.
- Beginners should aim to continually kick for twenty to thirty seconds.

NOTE:

Keep your core connected! Be mindful of the symmetry of your core/body, and know how to recognize when you've disconnected from a neutral spine. A common misstep is over-reaching the arm at the front of the stroke, causing a loose, bowed side-body. This lateral movement in the torso causes less power to be transferred from the catch to the propulsive phases of the pull.

For swimmers, an activated core means you can move through the water more effectively with less effort. Your core facilitates the long axis rotation necessary for an effective freestyle and backstroke and it enables the full body undulation required for breaststroke and butterfly.