

## STRONG TO THE CORE

BY JORDAN HOLT, MS, ATC

Deep down under a few layers of skin and other tissue lies our “core” which is comprised of a set of muscles that surround, insert into, and stabilize our spine and joints. It feels like a good place to start this year as we focus on *Building Together* for Work Right’s 10th anniversary. Because if we’re going to build something RIGHT, we might as well start with a strong foundation!

### CONQUER THE CORE

Did you know that back injuries account for 1 in every 5 workplace injuries? The industrial setting features many jobs that place different forces on the lower back, and therefore we must get ahead of the game. Let’s start the year off right and create a New Year’s resolution to improve our back health by strengthening our core!



### CORE-SCRIPTION

Now here’s the question you’ve been waiting for. *How often should you be strengthening your core?* All it takes is 2 to 3 times per week of a core training session. This can be simply added into your normal fitness routine or into a couple of 15 minute chunks during the week. Consistency will allow your body to adapt and grow. As you begin on this journey of mastering your core, start with basic exercises. Keep them short and simple and focus on engaging (squeezing) your core muscles through each movement. Once you feel improvement, gradually build to more advanced exercises to challenge your body. An easy way to push yourself a little further can be by adding in more repetitions with each set or increasing the time! Let’s talk about my favorite core exercise...the Plank!

### CORE-DEFINING

The term “core” refers to the central part of your body and includes a variety of muscles, all of which play a significant role in the reduction of lower back pain and injuries. Picture the foundation of a house. This is the core of the human body. It is what the whole structure relies on, and if it’s weak, it will crumble.



When we build up our core body strength, our muscles can work together to stabilize and take the load off the spine, reducing the forces on the back and therefore helping decrease injury risk!

If we don’t have the support of our muscles, the joints of the spine and compensatory muscles are forced to take over and work that much harder. In many industrial jobs where repetition is a part of the job tasks, this repetition mixed with a weaker core is a recipe for injury and/or pain.

**Planks:** Place your hands or elbows directly under your shoulders and your feet about hip-width apart. Squeeze your core muscles and try to maintain a straight line with your body, parallel to the floor below you. If you want to see how well you can stay straight, take a video of yourself so you can improve on it.



Here is an example of a progression from easy to more challenging starting with a simple plank.



Start on extended arms and extended legs (or on your knees).



Progress to a forearm plank, hold for longer, or lift a hand to tap the opposite shoulder.

**Jordan Holt, MS, ATC** || Jordan is a Certified Athletic Trainer who began his education at the University of Oregon for his Bachelor's degree in Human Physiology before moving back to Portland to obtain his Master's degree in Athletic Training. In his personal time, he loves being active: powerlifting, hiking, attending sporting events, and spending time with his dogs.

**Work Right NW** is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.