

The “Big 3” - Core exercises.

These exercise are designed to maximize muscular effort while minimizing compression of the lumbar spine.

With all of these exercises, an emphasis should be placed on abdominal bracing. Abdominal bracing can be described to the patient as the sensation experienced when blowing a candle out... this is an isometric contraction of the abdominals.

#1 - The Curl-Up

The curl-up is the first in this series. It is a safer alternative to the typical crunch or full sit up, which places a very large compressive load on the lumbar spine, forcing it into flexion... a common mechanism of disc injury.



1. lie on your back with your hands under your low back, palms down. Bring one leg up so that the foot is flat on the floor – this keeps the spine in neutral curvature, avoiding flexion of the lumbar spine.

2. Engage the abdominals using abdominal bracing. The abdominals are the prime mover in this exercise, not the neck or shoulders.

3. The torso, shoulders, head and neck should move as one solid unit, as though fused, in order to focus muscle firing to the abdominals. The head should be the last thing to leave the ground, in line with the torso. Be sure the chin is not tucking or jutting forward. Bring your shoulders slightly off the ground, with the elbows remaining in contact with the ground. The shoulders only need to leave the ground a few cms in order to be effective.

4. Hold 7-8 seconds, and repeat until form can no longer be properly maintained. Be sure to emphasize the importance of correct form over number of repetitions.

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