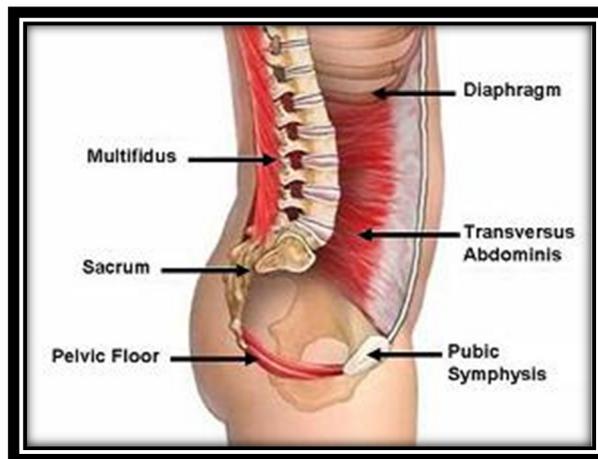


## What is your Core?

So many people come to a Pilates session because they've been advised or believe they need to strengthen their core. They are then often surprised that our sessions do not consist solely of abdominal exercises. Why is this? Well it is simply because the abdominal group of muscles is not the core.

Your core is a complex series of muscles, extending far beyond your abs, including everything pretty much in your torso. It is incorporated in almost every movement of the human body. The core is used to stabilise the thorax and the pelvis both statically and during dynamic movement; it also provides internal pressure to expel unwanted products from the body.(!)

Major muscles included in your core are the pelvic floor muscles, transversus abdominis, multifidus, internal and external obliques, rectus abdominis, erector spinae, and the diaphragm. The lumbar muscles, quadratus Lumborum, deep rotators, as well as cervical muscles, rectus capitus anterior and lateralis, longus coli and latissimus dorsi may also be considered members of the core group.



To make it simpler I like to think of it as baked bean can- it has a top(diaphragm), bottom (pelvic floor) and then a whole mesh of other muscles that wrap around to provide a supportive girdle. All elements of it must be intact and working together to provide the stability and strength.

### Why Train it?

#### Help prevent Injury

There is evidence to suggest lack of core muscular development can result in a predisposition to injury. (*Karageanes, Steven J. (2004). Principles of manual sports medicine*). So, train your core and help prevent those niggles and aches and pain from developing into anything more serious.

#### Improve Posture

Who doesn't want great posture? If you don't train the supporting baseline muscles of the core, then everything else is on rocky ground! Just like trying to build a house on foundations of quick sand.

#### Help Fight Stress

Ok so you may not think of your core being connected to the brain and stress responses. But there is a lot of new research coming through that is linking the two. Peter Strick, professor and chair of the

department of neurobiology at the University of Pittsburgh Brain Institute has been involved in research and has subsequently taken up Pilates!

“There’s all this evidence that core strengthening has an impact on stress. And when you see somebody that's depressed or stressed out, you notice changes in their posture. When you stand up straight, it has an effect on how you project yourself and how you feel. Well, lo and behold, core muscles have an impact on stress. And I suspect that if you activate core muscles inappropriately with poor posture, that’s going to have an impact on stress.”

“How we move, think, and feel have an impact on the stress response through *real* neural connections.”

Something to ponder.....

So next time we are working through Swan Dive or Side Bend in class remember it’s not all about the 6 pack!



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