

Lowey Chiropractic Wellness Center

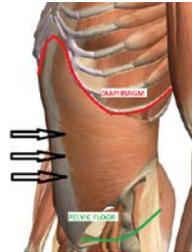
169 Route 6A, Orleans, MA 02653

Phone (508) 255-5866

Fax (508) 255-0888

www.LoweyChiropracticWellness.com

Abdominal Bracing



Abdominal bracing is a core stability technique you can use to help maintain the integrity of your spine and prevent injuries. Your core is simply a term for the muscles that help to protect your spine.

Bracing is something that occurs naturally in all healthy active individuals during all movement. It's an automatic response used by our bodies to help prevent injuries to our spine. The problem is, the majority of us are just not as active as we were created to be. We spend most of our lives sitting or lying down. We have therefore, lost our flexibility and this automatic bracing response.

Most of us are unable to avoid sitting for long periods of time. This means we need to reinforce our body's ability to protect our backs and prevent injuries through practice. We need to re-teach our bodies what they have forgotten! **Your core muscles should always be contracting except when you sleep.**

Try this experiment on yourself. Stand up and dig the tips of your fingers into the sides of your abs. You should feel a little bit of tension there, if you start to walk you should feel a lot more going on. Try turning on the spot, again you should feel the tension increase slightly.

Now, sit back down again and have another feel of your abs, can you feel how these muscles have turned off? That's exactly the problem with sitting. When we sit down our core muscles turn off which compromises our spines and often leads to the development of back pain or other injuries.

Bracing while standing

Stand back up again, making sure that your hips are under your lungs. Now imagine a piece of string has been threaded through your entire upper body. The string goes all the way up from your buttock, through every vertebra in your spine to the top of your head. Imagine someone is gently pulling this string upwards pulling every bone in your back up and making you feel slightly taller (don't stick your chest out or lift your chin!).

Take a deep abdominal breath, making sure that your belly inflates as you breathe in. Hold this breath. Now tighten all of your abs to about 10% of maximum and breathe out while keeping this tension. Your belly shouldn't protrude out more when you brace. You should find that you can now breathe completely normally with a bit of tension still in your abs. That's it, that's how you set your core! Don't pull your belly in. It's tightening of all of your torso muscles you want to attain. Practice this again and again while standing until you can do it easily.

Depending on how aware you are of your own body, you may have noticed that your buttock muscle tightened slightly as you engaged your abs. This is because muscles rarely work alone and often one action triggers another. When you tightened your core muscles, your body prepared itself for movement and stabilized your hips at the same time. For a lot of people this buttock tightening actually realigns their pelvis into a neutral position.

Bracing while sitting

The technique above can, and should, always be used when sitting. Just sit tall (without sticking your chest out or lifting your chin), take an abdominal breath, tighten up to 10% and breathe out. This should be your default torso position when you are sitting.

Most of us sit in a slumped relaxed state, relying mainly on our muscles and ligaments for support. Sitting at 90° angles in a chair isn't something that our bodies were originally designed to do (chairs haven't really been around that long). Sitting is a form of resting and we spend a lot of time doing it. Therefore it's not really surprising that our bodies forget how to stabilize our spines and hips. Unfortunately, for most of us sitting is a necessity and part of our working lives. In order to minimize the damage try to keep your core set for as much of the time as you physically can.