

**Protect Your Back Core Strength Tips For Supine Floor Exercises**  
**Please read before practicing the supine floor exercises**

**LOWER BACK CAUTION:** Tips for practicing the following supine position exercises listed below

- ❖ **The Core (torso) muscles** are those muscles, which support and stabilize the spine standing, sitting, lying down, running walking or lifting. They are located between the shoulders and the pelvis, front to back and side to side. Below are directions for floor positioning of the spine, hips and shoulders:
  - **Engage the pelvic floor, by pulling the muscles at the bottom of your pelvis up toward the belly button and back toward spine without rolling your hips backward. This starts to activate the cores muscles that support the pelvic girdle.**
  - **With level hips (think of hips as a bucket, keep the bucket full of water) pull the belly button in then tighten upward toward ribcage (engaging the coughing muscles called the midriff muscles).**
  - **Lengthen out the spine as if being elongated out through the crown of the head. Broaden the chest settling the shoulders and ribs into the floor and engaging the midriff muscles. (*Contracting core muscles creates the sensation of a cement slab being placed on your torso*). This is called abdominal bracing, the beginning of all core (torso) strengthening and resistance work. I call this **Zippering the Zipper.****
  
- ❖ **Use lower back props during supine exercises as needed**
  - A pillow may be used under hips or knees for more back support until your abdominal muscles can maintain neutral spine position on their own (**Abdominal bracing...practice pulling pelvic floor muscles upward toward the navel and in toward the spine without using leg or buttock muscles and holding the contraction for a few seconds and repeat for several repetitions**).
  - A pillow may be used behind head for more neck support and comfort.
  - A pillow may be used between knees for side lying position support.
  
- ❖ **During abdominal work**, core muscles must be engaged (as mentioned above) to enhance hip, shoulder and spinal stability during exercise movements. Core muscles work to tether your torso to the floor.
  - Breathing is very important during all of the various exercises.
  - Unable to keep hips anchored to the floor when you are extending arms and legs then you are extending to far from your trunk's (core) ability to keep spine/hips stable during movement.
    - **The further your limbs are away from the trunk the more intensely the core must work. Once you break form (shoulders, ribs or hips elevate or back arches) stop rest and begin again.** Over time intensity and duration increase.
    - Start with smaller movement (less intense) to larger movement (more intense). Always listen to your body and notice if you feel uncomfortable in the position. Make any adjustments needed to create comfort and support.
  
- ❖ **The Abdominal Exercises and Their Progressions include:**
  1. **Abdominal Bracing** to maintain neutral hip position without using legs or buttocks muscles to maintain hip position
  2. **Isometric Belly blaster** engage core, bringing thighs to chest, hands press against thighs to resist thigh coming toward chest. Must breathe and count during resistance exercises. **NEVER HOLD YOUR BREATH**

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3. **Dead bug progression** from abdominal bracing in hook knee position (knees bent with feet on or off floor)
  - a. Hook knee position feet on floor begin marching (alternate lifting and lowering feet to floor from hip joint not the knee).
  - b. Hook knee position with feet off floor begin marching legs... alternate lifting and lowering one foot to floor
  - c. Hook knee position with legs extending out 45° from trunk while keeping feet off the floor
  - d. Variations using both the arms and legs
    - i. Dead bug moving both legs and arms through best range of motion. Either with marching or extending legs while arms are alternately extending over head toward floor, called opposite arm and leg extensions
    - ii. Dead bug on the angle lifting shoulder toward opposite inner thigh or knee or toward a somewhat extending knee.
4. Progression of “C” is curls upper abdomen(those muscles located at the base of the ribcage) by lifting shoulders off of the floor and keeping neck stable
  - a. With knees in bent position and feet on floor sliding hands up thighs toward knees with neck stabilized
  - b. With knees in bent position and feet on floor and crossing arms behind head creating a cradle to help neck stabilization
  - c. With knees in bent position and feet off floor crossed at ankles, curling upper body toward thighs and knees
  - d. With both legs straight up in perpendicular position make small scissor leg motions at ankles.
  - e. With both legs straight in perpendicular position curl upward toward thighs, could add scissor legs motions
- ❖ **Muscle Release Stretching** breath into and through the stretch at your comfort zone beginning at about 70% of stretching ability then progressing to an increased stretched position. Always pain free and relaxed with good breathing
  1. **Double thigh hugs** for a back release. Gently pulling knees to chest while keeping hips feeling heavy to the floor
    - a. could gently pull thighs and forehead closer together creating an easy ball
  2. **Hip knee rolls side to side** keeping knees and feet together
  3. **Full body extending stretch** *Low back caution* one or both legs as long as there is no pain
  4. **Full body stretch with arms overhead** helps relieve abdominal tightness.