

# HARD CORE

Forget traditional crunches and sit-ups. Registered kinesiologist and Pilates instructor Dorothy Leung shares her workout for strong abs and a rock-solid core.

BY KATE DALEY

## BRIDGE

Lie on your back with your arms at your sides, your legs bent at the knees, hip-width apart, and your feet flat on the floor. As you exhale, engage your abs and push into your heels to lift your pelvis into a bridge position. Inhale and lower your pelvis to the floor, allowing a slight, natural curve in your back. Do six repetitions.



### BRIDGE WITH HIP DIP

Lift your pelvis into the bridge position, then slightly lower your right hip, balancing your weight on both feet and keeping your knees still. Return to centre and repeat on the opposite side. Do three repetitions on each side.

### SINGLE-LEG BRIDGE

Lift your pelvis into the bridge position. Stabilize your torso and shift your weight onto your left leg. With your knee bent at a 90-degree angle, lift your right leg until your calf is parallel to the floor. Keeping your right leg lifted, inhale and lower your pelvis to the floor. Exhale and lift your pelvis back into the bridge position. Do three repetitions. Repeat on the opposite side.



WATCH THE FULL WORKOUT AT [canadianliving.com/coreworkout](http://canadianliving.com/coreworkout).

# SIDE-LYING BICYCLE

Lie on your side with your legs stacked and angled toward the front corner of your mat and your head resting on your lower arm. Keeping your hips and torso stabilized, lift your top leg to hip height and sweep it forward. Next, bend your knee at 90 degrees, then straighten as you extend your leg behind your body. Do three repetitions, then reverse direction for three additional reps. Repeat on the opposite side.



**A**



**B**



**C**



**D**

**WHERE IS MY CORE?**  
 “YOUR CORE IS MORE THAN JUST YOUR ABDOMINALS,” SAYS LEUNG. “IT ENCOMPASSES YOUR ABS, PLUS ALL THE MUSCLES FROM YOUR STERNUM TO YOUR PELVIS ON THE FRONT AND BACK OF YOUR BODY, INCLUDING YOUR GLUTES.”



## KNEE HOVER WITH KNEE TAPS

Starting on your hands and knees with your back parallel to the floor, your arms aligned directly below your shoulders and your knees directly below your hips, curl your toes under and lift your knees a couple of inches off the mat. Engaging your core, tap both of your knees onto the floor and then lift back up. Do six repetitions.



### OPPOSITE ARM + LEG REACH

Starting on your hands and knees with your back parallel to the floor, extend your left arm and right leg, keeping your chest lifted and your core engaged. Return your arm and leg to the mat. Repeat on the opposite side. Do three repetitions on each side.

## SIDE-LYING LEG LIFT

Lie on your side with your legs stacked and your head resting on your lower arm to keep your neck in line with your spine. Breathing in, engage your core and slightly lift your waist off the floor. Pointing your toes, lengthen and lift your top leg above hip level at a slow, steady pace, keeping your belly tight and your hips and torso stabilized. Lower your leg back down. Do six repetitions on each side.



### SIDE-LYING LEG CIRCLE

Lie on your side with your legs stacked and your head resting on your lower arm. Keeping your hips and torso stabilized, lift your top leg slightly above hip level and make a counterclockwise circle with your foot in the air six times. Then, reverse direction for six additional repetitions. Repeat on the opposite side.



## BREASTSTROKE

Lie facedown with your elbows bent, your hands beside your head, palms facing down, and your legs slightly turned outward. Engage your core and slowly lift your head, neck and chest off the floor. Slowly lower back down. Do three repetitions.



Extend your arms behind you with palms facing in. Lift your head, neck and chest, shifting your body weight to your pubic bone to protect your lower back. Keep your legs heavy on the mat while you hold the lift for one second. Then, slowly lower back down. Do three repetitions.



With your arms extended forward, your core engaged and your torso and hips stable, lift your left arm and right leg, then switch sides to flutter your limbs six times as if you're swimming. For an extra challenge, flutter arms and legs faster.

## TRIPLE LEG KICK

Lie on your back with your arms at your sides, your legs bent at the knees and hip-width apart, and your feet flat on the floor. Straighten your right leg along the floor and point your toes, then lift your extended leg upward. Flex your foot and lower your leg until it hovers just above your mat. Point your toes and lift your leg again. Do three repetitions. Repeat on the opposite side.



**A**



*For more of a challenge, try this move in a bridge position.*

**B**



**C**



**A**



**B**



**C**

**IF YOU FEEL ANY PAIN WHILE EXERCISING, STOP AND CONSULT A HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER.**

## PLANK WITH SINGLE-LEG TAP

Starting on your hands and knees with your back parallel to the floor, engage your core and step your feet backward, one at a time, until you're in a plank position. Pointing your toes, lift your right leg to hip height, then lower your leg and tap your toes onto the mat. Lift your leg back to hip height. Do three repetitions. Repeat on the opposite side. If you find this too challenging, try the exercise from a low plank position, supporting your weight on your forearms instead of your hands.

### WHAT DOES MY CORE DO?

THE CORE IS THE DRIVER OF ALL EXERCISE MOVEMENTS, SAYS LEUNG. IT PROVIDES TORSO STABILITY, WHICH, IN TURN, CONTRIBUTES TO IMPROVED ALIGNMENT, PREVENTING INJURY.