

What are stabilizing muscles?

Ever heard of stabilizer muscles? If you haven't, then you're definitely not along as most people don't know they even exist. When it comes to working out and fitness, most people primarily think about strengthening those muscles that move the body. Yet, it's the stabilizing muscles that hold your body upright and in control enough to even perform those squats while you're weightlifting or that tree pose during your simple yoga.

Movers & Stabilizers

There are two types of muscles in the body: movers and stabilizers. Movers are the muscles that are responsible for moving your body – i.e., they're the ones that enable you to do those bicep curls that get you massive arms or do those crunches that get you the washboard abs. They help you do push ups and pull ups, lunges and squats, planks and crunches. These are the muscles that most people think about and focus on when they hit the gym for strengthening.

Stabilizers, on the other hand, are what support your entire body. They are much smaller than the moving muscles, yet they are incremental in prevent pain and decreasing injury risk. These are usually the muscles that are the root cause of pain for people. However, they're usually the most ignored and forgotten, unless you go to a physical therapist.

Importance Of Strong Stabilizing Muscles

Physical therapists look at the entire body when it comes to finding the root cause of a patient's pain and injury. While some people ask what movement caused the problem, physical therapists look at how the body was performing during the movement. And, more often than not, the movement that causes is the pain is

the result of weakened muscles, muscle imbalance, and, in particular, weak stabilizer muscles.

When you have weak stabilizers, it becomes more difficult to perform tasks because of improper alignment and positioning. Furthermore, it can cause pain as misalignment strains joints and tendons unnaturally and unnecessarily. Abnormal movements of joints is one of the biggest contributors to pain and overuse injuries. Yet, many people do not look at the weakness of the stabilizing muscles as part of the problem. Instead, they simply focus on better alignment.

However, how does one have good alignment, proper positioning, and good posture? It's having strong stabilizing muscles that allows the body to perform optimally and efficiently.

Strengthening your stabilizer muscles is a vital aspect of fitness and athletics for many reasons:

1. Efficient movements & good biomechanics

If your stabilizer muscles are underdeveloped or inactive, this can cause you to compensate in other areas of your body and/or accommodate for the inefficient stabilization forces by generating momentum during the movement, making the exercise both less effective and riskier.

2. Produce more force

Strong stabilizer muscles allow you to handle greater loads during training. No matter how strong your primary movers are during an exercise, if your stabilizer muscles are lacking, the movement will be dysfunctional and not as much force can be applied. The more stable your structure, the more force you can produce during compound movements.

3. Prevent injuries

Just as you can produce more force with a stable structure, you are also much less likely to get injured or cause strains to your joints, ligaments and muscles. Strong stabilizer muscles make movements safer both inside the weight room and in the sports arenas, and it puts less unnecessary stress on your primary movers.

4. Correct posture & form

This one goes with the above three, but it deserves its own point. Strong, effective stabilizer muscles will allow you to have proper form, which is important for producing more force and preventing injuries.

If you have poor posture, working on improving the strength and function of your stabilizer muscles can help correct your posture during daily life as well.

5. Better balance & coordination

Having strong stabilizer muscles is important for having good balance and coordination. When playing sports or performing unilateral exercises, you want your entire body to stabilize your movement from your ankles to your knees to your core. Strong stabilizer muscles make you more agile and quicker to accelerate and decelerate.

So, as you can see, stabilizer muscles are extremely important. Take charge by working on stabilization now before you get injured and have to deal with the draining process of injury rehab later.

How to strengthen stabilizer muscles?

We are going to discuss the three best ways to strengthen stabilizer muscles, starting in this order:

- Free Weights
- Unilateral Exercises
- Balance Training

Summary on how to strengthen your stabilizer muscles:

- Your stabilizer muscles are going to get worked by free weights the best.
- As muscles act as primary movers or stabilizer muscles depending on the exercise, it's good to add variety to your workout routine.
- Compound movements are the best as they ensure a large number of your muscles are active during the exercise.
- Finally, add instability to your training by performing unilateral exercises and exercises with uneven loads...or both together.

Who would benefit from strengthening stabilizer muscles?

Athletes who want to boost their athletic performance! During a game you will be moving through multiple planes of motion, constantly. You are going to be

bending, turning, twisting, pushing, pulling, running, stopping, moving side to side, jumping, all at various speeds and directions. To do this efficiently and safely, you need to have strong stabilizer muscles that function effectively.

Gym-goers and fitness enthusiasts who want to improve their strength and look better! By making your stabilizer muscles stronger, you will be able to produce more force, which means you can lift heavier weights safely. Thus, you can also look better as you are training harder and breaking plateaus. And, most importantly, you will greatly reduce your chance of injury during lifts and training sessions.

People with balance issues! Some people naturally have poor balance. As you get older your balance becomes worse. Tall people have balance issues. In any case, anyone who is having problems with balance, whether serious or just a slight issue, focusing on strengthening stabilizer muscles can profoundly improve your balance and coordination.