

BY CHALENE JOHNSON

# No Equipment Required

Go back to basics with these three exercises for the core muscles.

The popularity of core training has led to the misconception that to get results you need to use equipment. This simply isn't true. And it's a good thing too, because group fitness instructors don't always have a lot of equipment to work with. In fact, there are a number of moves that will dramatically increase core strength without equipment—all you need are your body and sound instruction.

In an American Council on Exercise–sponsored study conducted by Peter Francis, PhD, and Jennifer Davis, MA, the vertical-leg crunch was deemed one of the most effective abdominal/core exercises. By adding modifications, you can introduce variety to this exercise without compromising its effectiveness.

## VERTICAL-LEG CRUNCH WITH ARMS EXTENDED

- Begin supine, with lower back lightly pressing against mat.
- Extend legs straight up, ankles together.
- Lift arms overhead, lacing fingers.
- Support head and neck between arms.
- **ANOTHER OPTION:** Place one arm behind head and extend other arm overhead.
- Contract abdominal muscles by lifting torso toward knees.
- **HARDER:** Lower legs slightly toward floor while maintaining contact with mat.
- **EASIER:** Bring hands behind head.

## SINGLE-LEG STANDING ROW

Many core exercises are performed in the supine position. Yet functionally, we need core muscles to support us in a standing position. Fitness experts Scott Cole and Tom Seabourne, PhD, suggest using a combination of supine and standing exercises. One of my favorite standing exercises is the single-leg standing row.

- Begin by standing on one leg.
- Next, simulate the motion of rowing a canoe.
- Lifted leg either stays stationary or lifts and lowers with rowing motion.
- Exaggerate movement by fully extending both arms and rowing from side to side.
- For the ultimate core challenge, slightly flex torso laterally toward side of your row.
- To decrease difficulty, allow toe of lifted leg to lightly touch floor.

## VERTICAL-LEG CRUNCH WITH A TWIST

- Begin supine, with lower back lightly pressing against mat.
- Place hands to sides, palms down.
- Extend legs straight up, ankles touching.
- Slowly lower legs toward left corner of room.
- Roll up onto left forearm as you contract abdominal muscles and lift and rotate torso.
- Reach toward right ankle with right hand.
- **MODIFICATION:** Perform as stated, but with bent knees.

Chalene Johnson is the creator of Turbo Kick™ and PiYo™.

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### References

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