**What is the CORE and why is it so important to have a STRONG CORE?**

I’ve always felt that having a strong CORE is the most important strength to have and this is why…

The core muscles are all the muscles that attach to the spine not just the abs and back. It includes the shoulders, trunk and pelvis. It provides stability to all movements and transfers forces between the upper and lower body. Before any powerful movement can occur through the limbs, the core needs to be strong.

**Why is the core so important?** Think of your body as a chain and all parts are connected. Your core is where the chain comes together, so strengthening your core gives you better stability. It is the foundation for posture, balance and movement. A strong core makes all movement more forceful thus improving any sport activities. It preserves a healthy spine alleviating back pain and helps prevent injuries.

 So how do you train the core muscles to have better balance, posture, more efficient movement, and yes, even whittle the waist at the same time? Who doesn’t want that? You can train your core muscles to achieve these benefits.

 I do not believe that sit-ups are the best way to strengthen the core muscles. I suggest you learn the abdominal bracing technique, which is an exercise in which you contract or draw the belly in to activate the TVA. (Inner core stabilizing muscle) Abdominal bracing helps keep you in neutral spine. Neutral spine is a posture that aligns you within the natural curves of your spine finding balance between the front and the back of the body. This posture puts the least amount of stress on the spine. To achieve neutral spine posture, contract or draw in the belly as in abdominal bracing, lift up the rib cage, and pull the muscles between your shoulder blades down and in. Think of your front body moving up and back body moving down.

Once you mastered abdominal bracing and neutral spine, you can learn the plank and the many variations of the plank. The plank is a good foundation exercise to build core strength and there are many ways to progress it. Bridges and Sir-the Pot are variations of the plank using a stability ball. As I mentioned earlier, I don’t recommend using standard sit-up exercises for building the core muscles, unless they are done on a stability ball. There are many sit-up variations that you can do on a stability ball. I like using the ball to train my client’s for these reasons. First of all, the shape of the ball supports your lumbar spine (lower back) Also, when you use the ball, its instability forces you to contract those inner core muscles. I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions or to learn more contact me at Focus1onfitness@gmail.com