

Strength and Conditioning

Core strength and conditioning are vital to triathletes. It will provide you with stability; help you become stronger, more efficient, and less injury-prone. Most of us spend large chunks of the day sat down which can have a detrimental effect on posture, strength and conditioning.

Below you will find a quick intro to Strength and Conditioning, which often includes 'Core' workouts. The aim here is to provide some guidance that will help:

- Redress the lack of flexibility and core strength that our sedentary office day creates
- Provide you with a bank of conditioning and stretching exercises to use through your athletic career

CORE

Core strength helps keep you level in the water, rotate better and pull through the water more efficiently. It will help transfer more power to the pedals by providing a solid platform for the lower body to push against. And finally, when you get to the run, it'll keep the body upright so that you can keep engaging the right muscles for the run, and not slouch when tired.

PILATES

Pilates is often prescribed by physios and doctors post injury. Specific areas are targeted with slow precise movements that fatigue muscles and promote a stronger, leaner more flexible body.

A strong core will stabilise the body more efficiently during the swim, bike and run.

Good shoulder-girdle stability reduces tension in the neck and upper back and allows the body and arms to rotate and move freely. Strong abdominals protect the lower back and keep the torso upright allowing efficient use of the lungs for optimum energy. While strong glutes and good pelvic stability propel you forward fast.

Pilates will help establish good technique for more demanding strength and conditioning, HIIT and weights sessions.

YOGA

With so many different schools of yoga it's hard to know which one will suit you best.

Yoga is a practice for everyone. The gentle postures exercise every part of the body, stretching and toning the muscles and joints, the spine and the entire skeletal system. The internal organs, glands and nerves are also stimulated to promote a feeling of radiant health and vitality.

Restorative yoga

Restorative yoga is a nourishing practice that uses props and blankets to promote deep relaxation. The entire practice is devoted to ensuring the body is completely comfortable so the mind and nervous system can switch off.

In daily life we spend much of our time with the sympathetic nervous system working in overdrive. Work, training and family life places stress on our bodies and minds. We reach for caffeine, sugar and even drugs to keep going.

Taking time to relax should not be thought of as time away from training -it's an integral part of it. Energy is restored and a heightened sense of awareness is regained.

Hatha yoga

A traditional hatha yoga class will focus on breathing, postures and relaxation. Breathing exercises energise the body and clear the mind. Asanas or postures promote flexibility of the joints, tendons and skeletal system and gently massage internal organs while relaxation at the end of the session allows the body to melt and let go.

Many athletes find it hard to relax and then wonder why their bodies crash and burn.

During relaxation, there is a decrease in activity in the sympathetic nervous system (our fight or flight response) and an increase in parasympathetic activity where the heart rate slows down and less oxygen is used up.

Yin yoga

Yin yoga is a slow practice with postures held for up to 5 minutes. Props like cushions and bolsters are often used to add comfort and support and aid relaxation. Stretches are held in comfortable holds that gradually increase in intensity. Excessive tension will agitate the nervous system and inhibit deep breathing.

Great to do during a taper week to calm nerves and help sleep or during periods of injury and recovery.

Hot yoga

Yoga originated in India, a country where temperatures can be extremely hot and humid. The idea of practising in a heated studio replicates these conditions and the benefits gained from doing so. The heart rate is elevated so you work harder and sweat more which is very detoxifying and feels just like a good workout.

However, the body can be lulled into overstretching muscles that aren't used to such intensity so take care in the beginning.

More Info:

[Strength and conditioning](#) – Advice from BTF on some basic S & C exercises
[More S & C \(Videos\)](#) – From Global Triathlon Network (GCN YouTube channel)
[Functional core strength \(videos\)](#) – from GCN
[Pilates](#)
[Restorative yoga](#)
[Hatha Yoga](#)
[Yin Yoga](#)
[Hot yoga](#)