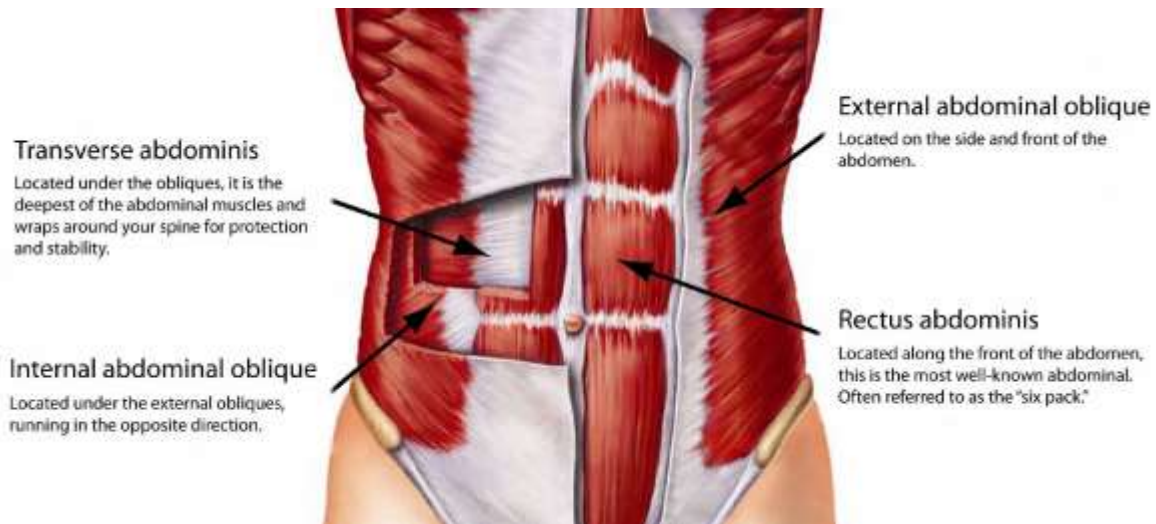


Activate your inner abs, the foundation of core strength

Your Transverse Abdominus is the deepest muscle of the abdominals, and with its fibers running cross-wise, transversely, it wraps the center of your body like a corset. This muscle is very important for trunk stability and support of the spine. Many people, even very active people, let this muscle get lazy as they age. The main culprit is too much time sitting. The good news is that anyone can learn to feel this muscle, and regain control of it.



The drawing above shows the depth of the T/A muscle. It does not show the extent of it though. The T/A attaches at the bottom of the ribs and top of the pelvis, and its horizontally oriented fibers wrap around to attach to the fascia of the lumbar and thoracic spine.

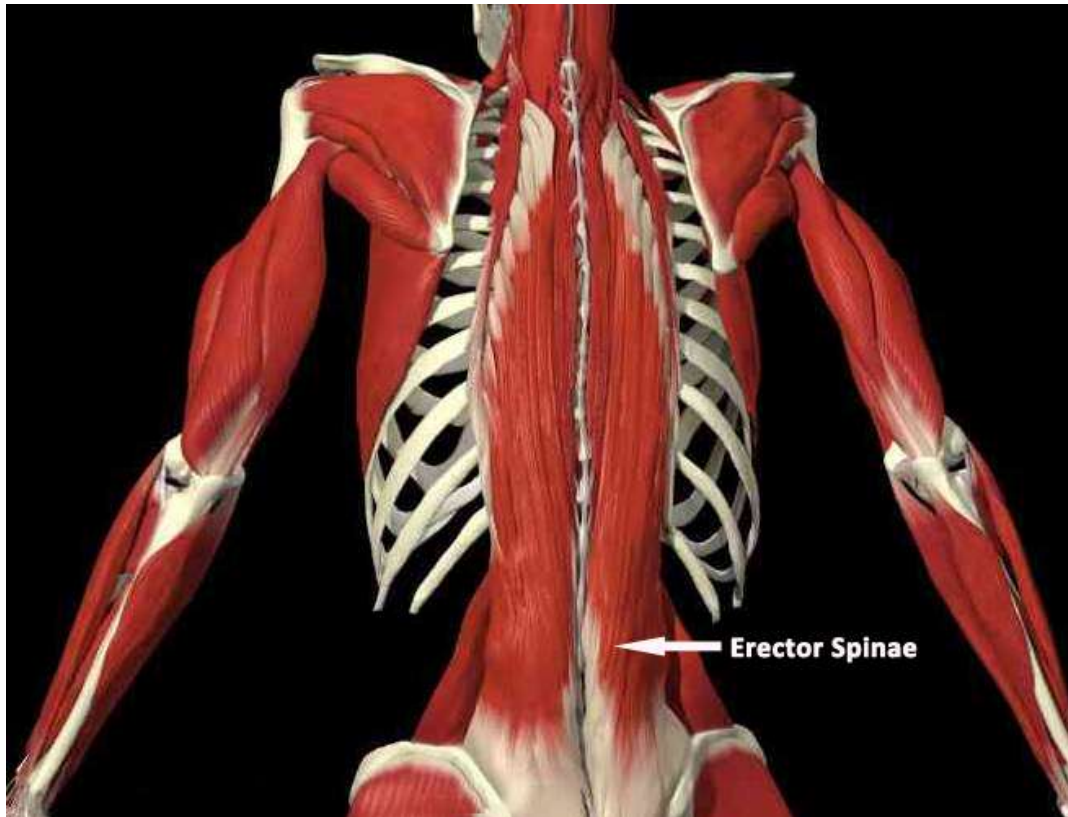
The Transverse Abdominal Co-Contraction:

This exercise is "pre-Pilates," introductory level. It's a great way to learn the sensation of a good transverse abdominal contraction.

Stand in socks or bare feet with your feet parallel and hip width apart. Imagine that your feet are like tripods, weighted equally on three points: your heel, the ball of your foot behind your big toe, and the ball behind the little toe. Your body is tall, your neck long, and your shoulders are down and wide onto your back. Breathe easily.

Take your hands behind your back, thumbs down and palms forward (elbows out to the side.) With your fingertips, feel around your spine just

above your waist. There is a groove in the center where your spine is, and on either side of this groove you will find a large muscle which runs the length of your back. **These are the erectors of the spine.**



Keeping your body straight (being careful not to bend at your waist,) lean forward a little, over your toes. You should feel those muscles engage, becoming larger and tighter as they work to keep your body upright. Return to your neutral balance and they should relax.

Be patient. Play around with this until you can really control it. Don't rush, keep breathing. Once you have this contraction and relaxation of the Erector Spinae mastered, it's time to go after the transverse abdominal muscle.

Inhale as you lean gently forward over your toes to engage the spinal erectors.

Exhale as you return back to your balance, but this time concentrate with your mind to keep the spinal erectors engaged. This will force a strong co-contraction of your inner, transverse abdominal muscle.

Holding this muscular contraction, inhale, filling the lungs toward the bottom and back while keeping your ribs flat. Hold for a count, then exhale and relax while keeping your nice tall posture.

Practice this exercise until it becomes second nature. Do sets of five reps, deepening the contraction each time. Add extra breath cycles while holding the contraction.