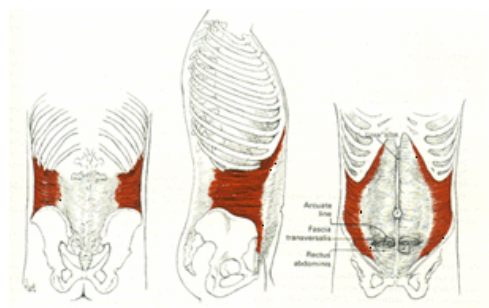


Spinal Stabilization

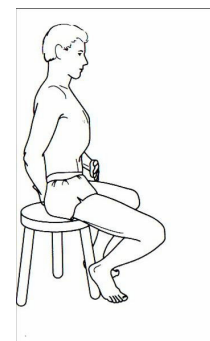
The Key to Ending Spinal Pain

Part I: The TVA (Transverse Abdominal Muscle)



This muscle is a broad sheet that connects the fascia of the back muscles to the main abdominal muscles in the front. It holds your belly in. It functions like a back brace to stabilize your back. You can start doing Part I immediately. Studies show that doing this first, before Part II, will greatly increase the effectiveness of your rehabilitation.

- 1. Abdominal Hollowing** The first step is identifying and learning to “turn on” your TVA. It’s simple: “Suck in your gut.” Use your abdominal muscles to pull your belly button in as far as you can towards your spine and hold for 30 seconds. Learn to contract and hold this deepest layer of core muscles. It’s like pulling in your belly in order to zip up a really tight pair of jeans. Holding these deep muscles immediately reduces the pressure on your back and will help you keep upright and reduce the strain on both your back and your neck.
 - Practice contracting and holding for a count of 10, relax and repeat.
 - Do this when you are doing decompression (inversion table or traction).
 - Do it throughout the day.



- 2. The Plank** Get on the floor with your weight supported by your toes and your elbows and your body held straight and rigid. Count slow seconds and hold for as long as you can. Repeat twice a day. It is good to do this a few times next to a mirror to make sure you are holding your body straight. Stop when you can no longer hold it straight.



- 3. Use It** Practice engaging the TVA throughout the day. This is the muscle you want to use to keep good posture instead of pulling yourself upright with back muscles which can cause strain. Don’t pull back, push up from the inside. Aim to make this a habit all day long. Added benefit: a slimmer tummy. Get so it becomes automatic. Remember the 21 Day Rule: If you do this consciously for 21 days it will become a habit.

For Neck Pain Too! Engaging the TVA is part of rehabilitation for neck pain too. You need to avoid stressing your neck by keeping your head over your shoulders. Use your core to hold yourself upright rather than pulling back and straining your upper back.

The Science

Much of the research and information on this subject is found in this book: **Therapeutic Exercise for Lumbopelvic Stabilization: A Motor Control Approach for the Treatment and Prevention of Low Back Pain**, ed 2 Richardson C, Hodges PW, Hides J. Edinburgh, United Kingdom, Churchill Livingstone Inc, 2004, hardcover, 271 pp, \$49.95. People who followed through with Step I **before** going on to Step 2 had much better outcomes. But don’t go on to Step II until you have been cleared by your doctor!



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