



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



The Core Supports Brain Health, too!

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we focus on exercises that concentrate on the body core with benefits to brain health.***

Studies abound on the positive effects aerobic exercise such as running, cycling, or swimming, can have on the brain. Increased capacity of the heart, lungs, and blood to transport oxygen results in a boost in the number of blood vessels and synapses, increased brain volume and decreased brain atrophy. A boost in the number of new nerve cells and increases in proteins that help these neurons survive and thrive also have been reported.

But according to a [Harvard Health report](#), brain health and performance improvements, including cognitive improvements, have also been demonstrated with other forms of exercise, like strength training and mind-body exercises such as yoga and tai chi.

Among the most popular strength training activities are core exercises, those that work out the abdominal, obliques, back muscles and pelvic floor muscles. These muscles are crucial for the transfer of energy from larger to smaller parts of the body. Like the trunk of a tree, core muscles need to be strong, yet flexible.

A strong core helps prevent back pain and makes other forms of exercise, like the aerobic activity mentioned earlier, easier by increasing endurance and preventing injury and falls.

But core exercises have a direct link to brain health, too. They also stimulate the midline cerebellum, the area of the brain responsible for movement, coordination and posture.

So, there is more to the core than a tighter waistline and six-pack abs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are many great ways to strengthen your core muscles and support your brain health and performance. In general, moderate exercise is safe for healthy youth and adults. Check with your doctor if you've had hip surgery, have pain in your hip joints or back, or if you have a chronic or unstable health condition, such as heart disease or risk factors of heart disease, a respiratory ailment, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, or diabetes.

Following are some of the resources to discover outdoor brain health and physical fitness on the Suncoast:

- [Lakewood Ranch Parks and Recreation Guide](#)
- [Sarasota Parks and Recreation Guide](#)
- [Manatee Parks and Recreation Guide](#)
- [Beach Yoga Classes in Sarasota and Venice](#)

Below are some of the activities available to support physical fitness and brain health on the Suncoast.

- **CORE AND MORE/TOTAL CORE.** Strengthen and condition your core muscles...and more! This class will work your core, which includes the abdominal and low back muscles. Additional exercises incorporate upper and lower body as a way to strengthen your core, giving you a full body workout, **4:30-5:15 p.m. Mondays, 10-10:45 a.m. Thursdays, G.T. Bray Recreation Center, Bradenton (941-742-5923).**
- **YOGA IN THE PARK.** Gentle yoga paired with lake views during the weekly LWR Farmer's Market. **10-11 a.m. every Sunday, Waterside Place, Lakewood Ranch (800-307-2624).**
- **AQUA FIT.** A low-impact, but high-intensity water aerobics class where no swimming skills are needed. Improve flexibility, range of motion, strength, muscle tone, and endurance while using the resistance of the water to cushion the feet, knees and back, **10-11 a.m. and 5:30-6:15 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and Noon-12:45 p.m. Saturdays, G.T. Bray Recreation Center, Bradenton (941-742-5923).**
- **STRENGTH+MOBILITY+BALANCE.** This 60-minute class is specifically designed for ages 55+ looking to build strength, increase mobility and target their balance. **8-9 a.m. every Wednesday, Summerfield Community Park, Lakewood Ranch (800-307-2624).**

- **OUTDOOR FITNESS CAMP.** Each camp is a full-body workout that challenges and accommodates all ages and fitness levels. **8:30-9:30 a.m. third Saturday of every month, Waterside Place, Lakewood Ranch.**
- **TAI CHI AND QIGONG IN THE PARK.** These ancient mind-body practices help regain health, relieve stress and increase strength. **9:30-10:30 a.m. Saturdays, Colonial Oaks Park, Sarasota (941-861-7275).**
- **JAZZERCISE.** A fun, high-intensity dance aerobic workout program, which offers a fusion of jazz dance, resistance training, yoga, Pilates and kickboxing movements. **9-10 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, Woodmere Park, Venice (941-861-7275).**
- **TEEN YOGA.** Teens will be guided through a variety of postures and breathing exercises to keep them actively interested, engaged and challenged. They'll have fun getting fit, improving strength, balance, flexibility and endurance. **Noon-1 p.m. March 6, April 10, May 8, Waterside Place, Lakewood Ranch (800-307-2624).**
- **PILATES.** Strengthen and lengthen the essential muscles of your core and more with focused exercises and restorative stretches. **8-8:45 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, G.T. Bray Recreation Center (941-742-5923).**

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the **Be Brain Healthy** movement, **because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).

