

# Mula Bandha

In yoga, proper core engagement is fundamental to a safe and healthy practice. By learning to activate the muscles in the trunk of the body, one can gain strength and stability that can be used in everyday movements. Have you ever been in a fitness class and heard the instructor throw out the words “engage your core”, or the yoga instructor say “don’t forget your Mula Bandha”? It seems like such a simple instruction, but when it comes down to it, what does it really mean?

One way to think about the core is to think of a box, the 4 sides of the box corresponding to a different muscle group. The front of the box being the abdominal muscles, the back as the back muscles, the top of the box is the diaphragm, and the bottom of the box is the pelvic floor. The Mula Bandha refers to the latter, the pelvic floor. When recruiting the muscles of the pelvic floor during exercise, you are protecting the lower back from overstress and injury.

There are several ways to practice activating the Mula Bandha, but perhaps the easiest way is to begin in a comfortable seated position. Close your eyes and focus on where your seat touches the floor or chair. Start with a gentle rock side to side, feel your weight shift from one sits bone to the other (these are the heads of the femur, the long thigh bone) and then sit up nice and tall with weight distributed evenly. Next begin to pull these two points towards each other, this will begin to engage the muscles of the pelvic floor. Another helpful way to think about contracting the space between the heads of the femurs is to imagine that you are practicing a Kegel (or that you are holding in a fart). Visualize that you have a string attached to the bottom of your tailbone and use that string to pull the tip of the tailbone forwards and upwards towards your belly button, like you are zipping up a tight pair of jeans. From here, keep that contraction and sit up nice and tall, shoulders pulled back, gaze straight ahead and focus on breathing.

You can practice this pelvic floor lock, the Mula Bandha, while sitting at home or at your desk. After this becomes easier, one can move on to practicing while standing or in your next fitness or yoga class.

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