

(SELF) MOTIVATE

And building a strong core is important for more than looking good in a two-piece. “It’s essential for day-to-day activities like twisting and lifting, but it also improves coordination and can help prevent knee, spinal and running injuries,” says Venu Akuthota, M.D., professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Just doing crunches won’t cut it, either. “In real life,” Dr. Akuthota says, “you don’t use your transverse abs or obliques in isolation. You use them in combination with other muscles in your stomach, back and butt.”

Padding or surfing on a board is one way to work all those key areas; another is with a strength-training routine that focuses on a range of core muscles (like our double-duty arms and abs moves on the opposite page). You can also try a fun twist, and a brand-new challenge, with indoor group workouts. These classes, available nationwide, use unstable surfaces to engage the core and simulate real-life sports—no swimsuit required.

➔ Three core classes to try

SURFSET

Practice planks, squats, push-ups and pop-ups (the surf term for the transition from lying to standing) on a 70-by-22-inch surfboard secured atop inflatable balls. Each class has a cardio component, too, with heart-pumping moves like wave runners, SurfSet’s version of mountain climbers done on the board. Find a class at SurfSetFitness.com.

INDO YOGA BOARD

This 69-by-16-inch wooden board rocks side to side as you flow through Vinyasa sequences. Once your balance and technique improve, you can up the difficulty level by attaching inflatable cushions to the board’s underside. Find a class at IndoBoard.com.

REALRYDER BIKES

If indoor cycling is more your style, try a class on a RealRyder bike. They’re built on a special frame that constantly moves beneath you the way a bike would, forcing you to engage your core as you move in three planes of motion—leaning side to side, shifting forward and back and rotating during turns. Find a class at RealRyder.com.

ON TREND

ENJOY THE RIDE

Sure, cushy sneakers feel good, but for runners, that padding has some heavyweight responsibilities: It has to absorb shock, decrease stress on the foot and help prevent injury, all without weighing you down. Luckily, today’s shoes are lighter, stronger and more resilient than ever, thanks to high-tech foam blends and innovative designs for every type of runner. Here are six new styles (from left to right) that feel ultra-comfy but still offer hard-core performance benefits. —*Amy Schlinger*

NEW BALANCE FRESH FOAM ZANTE

The hexagonal-cut Fresh Foam in these shoes provides evenly distributed cushioning, no matter what part of the foot you land on. Lightweight materials and arch support help prevent fatigue. **\$100; NewBalance.com**

ASICS 33-M

Plush foam in the soles keeps its shape from the third mile to the 300th—but still has enough bounce to keep legs going for the long haul. Antiodor sock liners are a nice bonus. **\$140; Asics.com**

PUMA IGNITE

World’s fastest man Usain Bolt rocks these—they contain a layer of super durable foam that’s used in cars to help disperse impact. **\$100; Puma.com**

ADIDAS ULTRA BOOST

Their cushioning contains 3,000 tiny foam capsules that transfer energy from foot strike to push-off, giving you extra power. The rigid heel design adds ankle stability. **\$180; Adidas.com**

NIKE AIR ZOOM PEGASUS 32

Runners who want to feel the terrain under their feet will love the new Pegasus, redesigned to offer a better fit. Even with its ample heel, the shoe has responsive handling. **\$110; Nike.com**

UNDER ARMOUR SPEEDFORM GEMINI

The foam foot bed starts out soft and springy for light jogs but firms up to offer shock absorption as pace or intensity increases. **\$130; UA.com**

