

Celebrate

healthy living

2018 Week 5

Squats for Strength

There is one exercise that should be part of everyone's routine — squats. It doesn't matter how old you are, your gender, or what your fitness goals are. Everyone can benefit from this exercise.

Squats are one of the best exercises for your lower body. They are great for strengthening your legs and glutes, and they also strengthen your core. When you do these properly, they also improve knee stability, promote mobility, and improve balance.

The squat is a somewhat complicated movement, and it is so beneficial because it forces the body's parts to work and grow stronger together as a single unit. It is one of the best functional exercises out there!

This is how to do squats:

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Keep your back in a neutral position, and keep your knees centered over your feet.
3. Slowly bend your knees, hips, and ankles, lowering until you reach a 90-degree angle.
4. Return to your starting position.

For a demonstration on doing squats [click here](#).

Demonstration of squats with a dumbbell [click here](#).



In this issue:

Squats for Strength

Leg Cross Stretch

Breathe Deeply Everyday

Smart Snacks

Recipe: Energy Bites

Coming next week:

Getting Past a Bad Week

Building Core Strength

Abdominal Twist — Stretch

Healthy Mexican Food Choices

Recipe: Corn and Black Bean Salsa

[Like us on Facebook: Kansas State University Walk Kansas](#)

This newsletter developed by Sharolyn Flaming Jackson, Extension Specialist – Family and Consumer Sciences, K-State Research and Extension.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact the Director of Institutional Equity, Kansas State University, 103 Edwards Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506-0124, (Phone) 785-532-6220; (TTY) 785-532-4807.

Leg Cross Stretch

This is a stretch that you can do anywhere! The Leg Cross Stretch is one that stretches the piriformis — a muscle that runs from the side of your hip to your pelvis. This is one of the muscles that allows you to rotate your thighs (specifically outwards) and it allows you to shift the weight of your body as you walk, keeping you from falling. If you have lower back pain and/or leg pain, performing the piriformis stretch could help. This move is a great stretching exercise for the back and buttock muscles.

To do this stretch from a sitting position:

Make sure you keep a flat, straight back through the whole stretch. Sitting up straight, pull one leg up and rest your ankle on your opposite knee. If possible, keep your leg parallel to the floor. Slowly bend forward until you feel your hips begin to stretch. (Remember to keep a flat back.) Hold this position for 20 to 30 seconds, then slowly raise your body back up. Perform the stretch a second time. After you finish one side, repeat the same stretch with the other leg.

Over time, and as your flexibility increases, you should be able to lean your chest in further before you feel the stretch on your hips.

There are several variations of this stretch, [including this one](#) that is done while lying down.



Smart Snacks

It is hard for most people to get through the day without getting hungry between meals or feeling like they need a little something to boost their energy. There is nothing wrong with snacking, and it can be good for you as long as you choose healthful foods in proper amounts. The key is to plan for snacks so you don't have to rely on choices from a vending machine or a local convenience store.

Think about your day and when you tend to get hungry. Plan ahead and bring healthful snacks to work, take healthful snacks with you if you will be traveling, and if you are hosting an event or meeting where snacks are served, offer healthy choices. Here are some suggestions.

Fresh fruit and nuts/peanut butter. Sometimes the best snacks are the simplest ones. A pear and a dozen almonds is a great snack. Or, pair apples with walnuts or bananas with pecans. Peanut butter, or almond butter, is amazing when you add it to your favorite fresh fruit and can provide the fuel your body needs before a walk or workout.

Hummus and veggies. Hummus is made from chickpeas and sesame oil. It is high in protein and contains healthful fat and fiber. Fresh veggies, such as carrots, celery, broccoli, and cauliflower, are great dippers with hummus.

Yogurt with fresh fruit. Your best bet is plain Greek yogurt — avoid yogurt that is loaded with sugar and just add some fresh berries. You will get lots of calcium, protein, and beneficial probiotics with this snack.

Another topper for plain yogurt is pecans and a little honey.

Popcorn. This whole-grain snack is high in fiber and low in calories as long as you don't cover it with melted butter. Keep a few bags of microwave popcorn on hand for a quick, healthy snack. These are available in single serving sizes. If plain popcorn is too boring, sprinkle a little Parmesan cheese on top.

Tuna and crackers. This snack is high in fiber, protein, and omega-3 fatty acids. It is a very satisfying snack. Start with whole grain crackers, slice a bit of celery (or sprinkle on celery seed) and add some tuna. Or, you could make tuna salad at home and bring just enough to dab on a few crackers.

Trail mix. This is typically a combination of nuts, dried fruit, and maybe cereal or granola. You can find many variations at the grocery store or make your own at home. This snack is easy to transport. Just a word of caution — trail mix can be high in calories and it is easy to wolf down more than one portion at a time. Divide the mix into small bags to avoid over-indulging.

Got a sweet tooth? A frozen fudge pop or popsicle in your favorite flavor might satisfy that. Or, how about a handful of grapes? Try them frozen for a real treat. There is nothing wrong with a few pieces of chocolate or a cookie. Moderation and smart portions are the key. One of these Energy Bites might also satisfy that sweet tooth and curb hunger between meals. They are tiny, but filling!

Breathe Deeply Every Day

This might sound strange, but many people don't breathe properly. Natural breathing involves your diaphragm, so when you breathe in your belly should expand. When you breathe out, your belly should fall. Over time, we tend to change the way we breathe and use our chest and shoulders. This promotes short and shallow breaths rather than deep breathing. Also, as we age and become more sedentary, the muscles of the lungs used in deep breathing may become neglected.

Deep breathing is an essential part of some types of exercise, such as Pilates and yoga. It is also effective in helping relieve symptoms of stress, can aid in getting better sleep, help control pain, and even aid in digestion. It is remarkably easy to learn how to breathe more deeply, using your diaphragm, and it is never too late to relearn natural breathing.

This week, after you have completed your cool down from walking or other activity, take a few minutes to practice the pursed breathing technique described below.

- Sit comfortably in a chair with a tall posture.
- Place one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your abdomen.
- Inhale through your nose for 4 to 6 seconds; the hand on the abdomen should begin to rise or push outward, while the hand on the upper chest should move very little.
- Pause for 1 to 3 seconds, holding the air in your lungs.
- Exhale air as slowly as possible, for 6 to 9 seconds, by pressing lips together tightly and engaging the abdominal muscles to exhale through your mouth, forcing the air between pursed lips. (This movement will simulate that of blowing out a candle.) The hand on the abdomen should move inward on the exhale, and the hand on the upper chest should move very little.
- Repeat up to two more times.
- Over time, work to increase the amount of time it takes to inhale and exhale.

Energy Bites

Makes 15 bites

Ingredients:

- 1 cup oats (quick-cooking or old fashioned)
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/4 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup roasted peanuts, chopped

Directions:

1. Add all ingredients into a bowl and mix together well. Refrigerate for at least 10 minutes.
2. Remove dough from refrigerator, scoop approximately 2 tablespoons out for each "bite" or use a cookie dough scoop. Roll mixture into a ball with your hands and place in a storage container in a single layer.
3. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Nutrition Information per 1-bite serving:

130 calories
7 g fat (1.5g saturated fat; 0 trans fat)
15 g carbohydrates
3 g protein
1 g fiber
35 mg sodium

