

Squats: Love ‘em or Hate ‘em

ADMIN JULY 18, 2012 0

Written by [Elizabeth Kovar](#), M.A. Contributor for Tools For A Great Life

Believe it or not, but you, yes you do squats every single day! Hard to believe? Well it's true! Standing up from a desk chair, appropriately picking up a box on the floor and getting up off the toilet are examples of a squat movement.

Squats are a movement that we implement daily; however, a squat is an exercise when load, stress, intensity and proper form is applied to the movement. In essence, squats are a functional in training to help strengthen the lower extremity for activities of daily living (ADL). Squats are compound exercise due to the fact that it utilizes more than one muscle group to perform the exercise. Therefore, squats primarily strengthen the quadriceps, hamstrings and gluteal muscles. In addition, squats assist in the strengthening of the ligaments and insertion of the tendons to the bone.

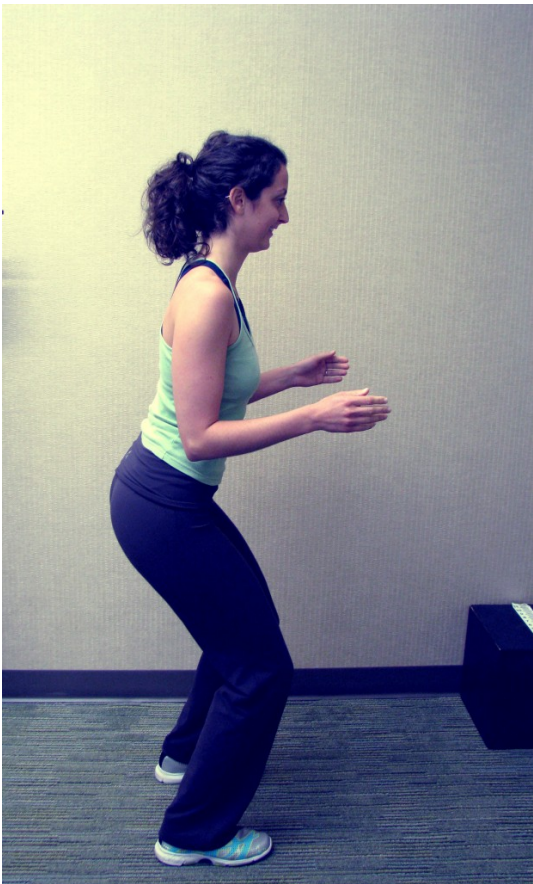
Squats are either beneficial or harmful to your legs. Proper form is essential to receive the strength gain and benefits from the exercise. Proper form consists of lowering the hips as if you are to "sit into a chair". The knees should naturally move with the exercise; therefore, knees should stay in level with your shoelaces. The spine needs to remain lengthened with a lifted chest and broad shoulders.

Common mistakes due to weaken muscles, fatigue or laziness include initiating the squat from the knee. This results in the knees going past the toes which strains and inappropriately stresses the knee joint. Another common mistake is initiating the movement from the torso. Many people will lower the torso to become parallel to the floor while sticking the glutes away from the body. In essence, the form feels more like a stiff legged deadlift that stretches not strengthens. This may result in repetitive stress of the lumbar and thoracic area of the spine with the incorrect movement.

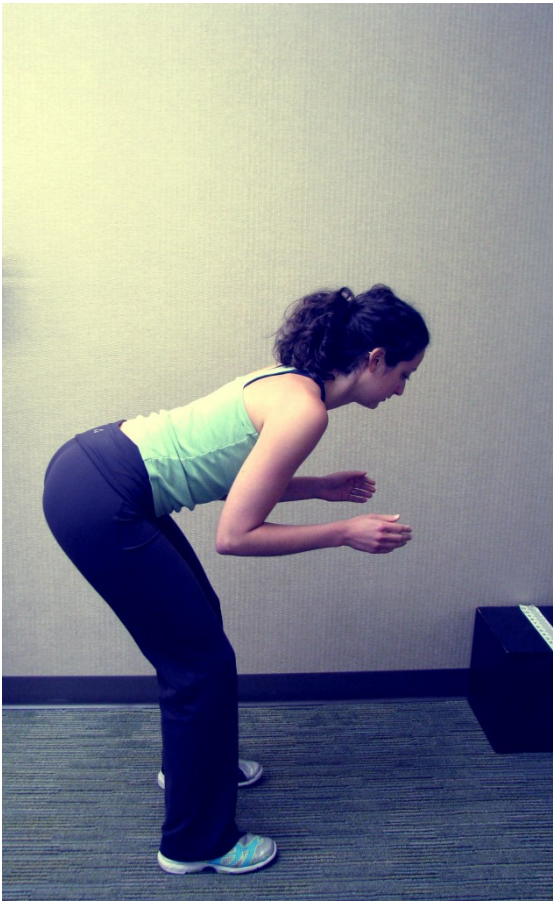
There are numerous, possibly hundreds of ways to perform squats. From stability balls to medicine balls to Olympic bars, you may experience a variety of in-place or dynamic movements. Need more squat ideas? Email me so I can share a variety of challenging, yet fun, squat exercises that fits best with your fitness level!



Correct Form



Squat initiated from knees



Squat Initiated from Torso

*BIO: **Elizabeth Kovar** M.A., Seattle resident, is the fitness coordinator at the Lynnwood Recreation Center. Elizabeth is a freelance fitness and travel writer, in addition to a personal trainer and group fitness instructor. She has also studied and worked within the fitness and sport industry within India and Australia. Please send questions and comments to erkovar@nwfitnessmag.com*