

WHY WE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF OUR **GLUTES**

In case you didn't know your Glutes are doing a pretty amazing job!

Gluteus Medius

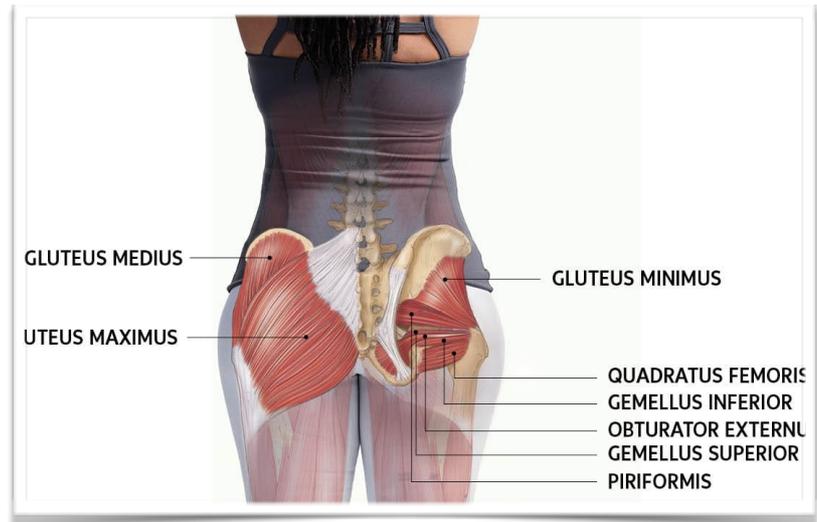
This is your chief "side stepping" muscle. It connects the ilium (hip bone) to the side of the upper femur. It helps you externally rotate your leg when it's extended behind you, and internally rotate your hip when your leg is flexed in front of you. Together with the gluteus minimus this muscle abducts the hip (moves it outward).

Gluteus Maximus

This muscle creates forward thrust as you walk, run, and rise from a squat. It's the biggest of the gluteals, and it attaches to the side of the sacrum and femur. It's responsible for extending and externally rotating the hip joint.

Gluteus Minimus

You will use this muscle when you make circular movements with your thigh. It's a smaller muscle located under the gluteus medius, the minimus helps you abduct, flex and internally rotate the hip.



Looking good/feeling good

When it comes to getting your behind into shape, it's about more than liking how you look in your clothes. We know that the glutes can do so much more than look great in jeans. Think about it... our glutes help us stand, walk, bend, get on and off the sofa and in and out of the car. They help us function and move each day.

Because your glutes are attached to muscles in your **hips, pelvis** and **back**, strong, lifted glutes help strengthen those areas. Strong glutes improve stability and prevent injury, which can be especially key for runners who experience pain in the lower back or hip flexors that often stems from the backside. A strong, toned rear can also keep your pelvis alignment, helping you maintain correct posture.

What is NOT good for Glutes

Unfortunately, there are a number of ways we jeopardise the health of this important muscle group. Our increasingly sedentary lifestyles are leading to what experts call "gluteal amnesia," in which the butt muscles become overstretched

Deep six glutes

Underneath three main gluteal muscles are "deep six" or "lateral rotator group" all of which externally rotate the femur in the hip joint. These muscles include:

- Obturator internus (not pictured)
- Quadratus Femoris
- Gemellus Inferior
- Obturator externus
- Gemellus superior
- Piriformis



SQUATS



LUNGES with Dumbbells

and underused. So if you have a sitting job, try to get out of your seat and walk around, go up and down the stairs or discuss your work with your colleague while standing.

It's also possible to overuse and overexert these muscles, whether you have a physically demanding job, or you are pushing too hard while running, hiking or squatting with heavy weights.

What is GOOD for Glutes

Exercise with correct posture! The key to firm glutes is to hit all of glute muscles from different angles and with a variety of exercises and cardio activities. You can't always change the shape of your glutes, but you can make them firmer and stronger. Make sure you are consistent, working out once a month will not give you the desired results!

Try incorporating these moves into your workout two to three times a week:

Squats - one of the best exercises to target gluteus maximus, the largest muscle in the lower body. Not only does the squat target the glutes, it also works the hips, thighs, calves, and even the core. Make sure you have correct form:

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart and, for added intensity, hold weights at shoulder level or at your sides.
2. Bend the knees and lower into a squat, keeping the knees behind the toes. Imagine that you're sticking your butt out behind you, but keep the torso upright and contracted.
3. Press into the heels to stand up.

Lunges - you really have to use your glutes to stabilise your body, make sure that your centre of gravity is in the middle and you are engaging both legs. This exercise also works hamstrings, quads and calves! There are many varieties so you can easily mix up your lunges, you can do them on the trampoline or with elastic bands for added resistance. How to do them:

1. Stand with feet staggered, one foot forward, one foot back about a metre apart.

2. Bend both knees and lunge straight down, sending the back knee towards the floor, keeping both knees at 90 degrees angle.
3. Try not to lunge forward over the front knee, keep the weight in the middle.
4. Press into the heel, squeeze the glutes and back of your leg to stand.

Glute Bridge

This one is one of my favourites! While you are raising your hips, you are toning your butt, reducing lower back pain, strengthening the core and stretching the hips! And you can add some variations to it: raising one leg, adding the weights (on upper thighs), you can perform this exercise also on the swiss ball! This would add some instability, forcing your entire lower body to work harder.



Glute Bridge

1. Lie flat on your back, bend your knees, until they're directly above your ankles. Place your palms on the floor on each side.
2. Tighten the glute and ab muscles then slowly lift your butt as high as possible.
3. Squeeze the glutes at the top for few seconds then lower it to the starting position and repeat.

Sidestep Squats with Resistance Bands

While the previous exercises target mostly the gluteus maximus, this move targets the smaller muscles of the gluteus medius and minimus. Because there's a squat involved, you are working the gluteus maximus as well. If you hold the handles of the resistance bands with the arms bent you can also get an isometric exercise for the biceps making this a great whole body exercise. Do it Right:

1. Use a band with medium-light tension and stand on it, holding onto both handles.
2. Take a wide step out to the right into a squat, keeping tension on the band.
3. Step the left foot in and continue stepping out and sweating to the right, all the way across the room (as far as you can).
4. Repeat the other way or for about 1 to 3 sets of 8-16 steps.

Walking up the stairs/step-ups

To make this really work, try to choose steps/platform high enough that the knee is at 90 degree angle when bent. If the steps are not high enough, you can try to take 2 together. This exercise will also strengthen your thighs, calves and will raise your heart rate!

I have've been doing this years Cliff path running series and wow, this is a serious workout for this muscle group. On the first one I almost found myself crawling up the steps towards the end. After a

bit more training and the next couple of runs I have noticed that the body has adjusted, muscles got stronger and the heart rate was more manageable. Important lesson here is that you need to pace yourself, don't push too hard too hard too soon. Start with shorter distances, include some steps that you can manage to run up even at a slower comfortable pace. Next time add a few more or try a little faster, gradually building it up each time. I'm not sure if I will ever say I love steps, but hey, they are a great challenge :)

Side Kicks/Kickboxing



Side Kick

Kicks are an excellent workout for the entire body. Controlled front kicks, sidekicks and back kicks work your hips, thighs and butt. When you kick, don't just swing your leg. Raise your kicking-leg's knee so your thigh is parallel to the ground, about hip/waist level, then extend the leg fully.

I use side kicks in my Jumping Fitness classes a lot. Doing them on the trampoline adds a bit of instability, all your micro muscles in your legs are working harder helping you to keep your balance. You can also add some punches to kicks and you have a full body workout!

Hiking

If you like outdoors, choose walking up an incline terrain, this automatically gets your glutes more involved and, if you're wearing a backpack, you're getting even more of a workout. Choose your own level and enjoy the fresh air and maybe also some sunshine with vitamin D. Extra oxygen fuels your muscles, organs and other body tissues, soon you will feel energised, fitter and happier ... and it doesn't cost you anything, well maybe a pair of quality hiking shoes.

I hope you have enjoyed this article... now, get up and start moving!

At the end of your session don't forget to stretch the muscles that you worked the most, this will prevent injuries and will keep your body happy.

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