

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Summer is here and its official, "buns are the new guns." So it's time to perk up that booty! Not only because no one ever wrote a song about a flat butt... but because powered up gluts look better in jeans and more importantly they make you more capable in life. Strong glutes are a key factor when it comes to producing power. Power is what aids all athletic movements. Strengthening the glutes will help you sprint faster, jump higher and be more explosive on the court or field. Strong glutes also help protect your knees and lower back from injury, while putting everyone else's neck at risk as they turn their heads to watch you walk by. And, just in case you were wondering this applies to both men and women. Everyone deserves a grrreat butt! Log onto any fitness board on Pinterest and you'll soon see that its "All about that butt". Not sure what exercise or techniques are best for building that booty? Incorporate these exercises/techniques into your workout regimen and you'll see results in no time. I see a full set of glutes in your future.

There are three muscles referred to as the "gluteus" of the three the gluteus maximus is the largest and most superficial making it one of the strongest muscles in the body. The gluteus maximus functions mainly to extend the hip. The smaller gluteus minimus and medius function in conjunction with a band of connective tissue that are crucial to thigh support during movements such as stepping sideways or walking.

Of all the bum friendly exercises to add to your training program, the **squat** should be numero uno. I used to loath squats - well because they're hard and - well because they hurt and they can become pretty boring after, oh - a second. However there's no arguing that squats are one of the best lower body strengtheners. There are plenty of variations, which can be performed together to make the squat very effective in targeting the gluteal muscles.

Try **single leg squats**. This exercise puts your body in an unbalanced position, you will have to recruit often unused muscles fibers in your gluts in order to maintain balance. To do it, stand with legs shoulder width apart, squat down, taking a big step to the right with the right foot hold for 5 counts and drag right foot back to starting position. Alternate sides for 20 reps.

A highly effective added variation to the side leg squat is the **curtsy squat**. Stand upright with feet shoulder width

apart. As you lower your body pick one foot up off the floor and cross it behind your other leg. Keep your arms facing out and slowly lower your body down until your hips are in a normal squat position. Do not shift your knee off centre line of your foot. Drive up through the heel of your standing leg and repeat on both sides. The curtsy squat activates the glutes in a unique way because it targets the abductor muscles, while a standard squat targets mostly the gluteus maximus.

The **lunge** can be a difficult but incredibly effective move. It targets the quadriceps and the glutes most intensely, but also hits the hamstrings, calves and core. Possibly the best benefit of the lunge exercise is that you can "even out" strength and muscular imbalances by bringing your weak side up to par with your stronger side. In a basic forward lunge, start with your feet together and take a step forward, leading with your heel. Lower your body by flexing the hip of your front leg until your back lower leg is parallel to the ground. If you want to maximize the benefits of lunges, ensure you're using proper form, keep your chest up and don't let your front knee go past your toes, press up through the heel of the front leg to starting position. If you're really looking for a challenge I recommend lunging by stepping down from an elevated platform. This increases range of motion, which will result in greater glute muscle fibre activation and growth. As for walking lunges, you knew this was coming... just do them. Nuff said.

I'm all about saving time, so I usually add resistance bands or weights to basic moves like squats or lunges to maximize my results. You'll work your glutes harder and burn more calories in a single workout. Place a weighted barbell across your shoulders or hold onto hand weights. This added challenge will get even the most stubborn glutes to grow.

How low should you go when targeting your glutes you ask? That depends on your knee, hip and lower back stability and mobility. Everybody's range varies for one reason or another. As with every workout program it is important to consult your physician before attempting any exercise. If you get the okay from the doc and you are unsure of any technique ask a trainer to observe your form. Well its effective to get low, if you can't get that low without dangerously rounding out your back, that's probably as low as you should go.

We've almost gotten to the point where any man or woman can hip-thrust in the gym without looking like a weirdo. The pelvic thrust or otherwise known as the bridge, builds strength in the glutes and erector spinae, which help you maintain proper posture when you're sitting or standing for an extended period of time. The move also strengthens the core which always helps with posture. Convinced? Here are a few bridge variations:

Bridge: Lay flat on your back with knees bent hip width and hands by your sides. Engage glutes and lift hips up as high as possible. Form a straight line from head to knees when you lift. Hold at the highest point for 2-3 seconds and lower back down to the floor. To make more challenging place a 10-15 pound weight on pelvis.

Single Leg Bridge: Lay flat on your back with knees bent hip width and hands by your sides. Bring right knee into your chest and keep it in place. Keep foot on the floor and knee bent. Engage glutes and lift hips up as high as possible. Form a straight line from head to knees when you lift. Hold at the highest point for 2-3 seconds and lower back down to the floor. Perform 20 reps on each side.

Inverted Bridge: Lie flat on your back with right foot on a stable bench or box. Bring left knee into your chest and hold in place the entire time. Lift the hips up as high as possible, pressing the right foot into the bench to lift. Return back to the floor and repeat the movement. Perform 10 reps each side.

Prepare to feel the burn in your glutes and once you've worked your glute to the max, it is important of course to give some "bootylicious" relief. Hit the foam roller for a few minutes or why not make a pretzel?

Pretzel Stretch: Lie flat on your back and bend both knees. Cross one leg over the other so your foot is on the opposite knee. Bring both knees towards your chest and gently pull the uncrossed leg towards you until you feel a stretch in your buttock. Hold for 30 secs

Building a strong, firm butt doesn't happen overnight nor by accident and in my experience, glutes respond best to variety. All of the exercises listed above require you to

work your lower body and gluts from a variety of angles. There are forward, reverse and lateral movements as well as heavy and light options. Stay focused and mix and match until you find your perfect sequence.

Here's to a gluteal glorious summer!

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