

Squats and Lunges for 'Core' Stability

In order to prevent injury and maximize performance exercises should be as functional as possible. Squats and lunges are two of the most functional exercises because they are involved in so many different activities. From lifting and bending to pushing, throwing, punching, etc.

Like many exercises which 'isolate' problem areas, squats and lunges work a common 'weak link' – the buttocks and thighs. In addition, these exercises will also improve your maintainance of an upright posture by training control of your 'core'. This is the area between your pelvis and your rib cage. Squats and lunges performed with proper form (an upright posture) *automatically* engage your deep abdominal and back muscles. This is the 'key' to stability of your ankle, knee, hip and low back.

The single leg squat facing the wall

Function: The squat is highly functional since it is part of daily activities such as lifting, bending, and getting out of a chair. Performing it on one leg is very challenging, but it has the added value of improving balance as well.

Your starting position:

- face towards a wall,
- reach forward so that your fingertips rest on the wall,
- stand on one leg.

The exercise:

- slowly squat down while sliding your fingertips along the wall,
- your depth is determined by your ability to maintain balance and keep your lower back straight,
- return to the starting position.

Repetitions: 8–10 slowly.

Frequency: twice a day (Fig. 1).

Forward lunge with arms overhead

Function: This exercise helps to improve your balance, flexibility and strength during walking, running, and climbing activities.

Your starting position:

- Stand facing straight ahead with your arms at your side.

The exercise:

- step forward and lower your trunk part way towards the floor,
- while you step raise your arms overhead,
- your stride and depth is determined by your ability to

Craig Liebenson DC

10474 Santa Monica Boulevard 202,
Los Angeles, CA 90025, USA.

Tel.: +1 310 470 2909 Fax: +1 310 470 3286;

E-mail: cldc@flash.net

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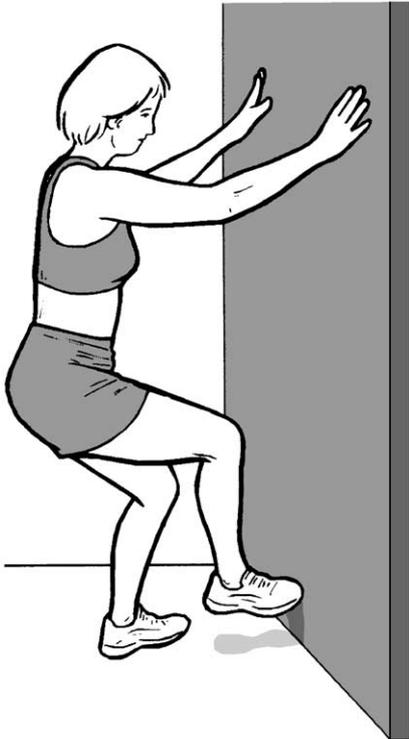


Fig. 1 The single leg squat facing the wall.



Fig. 2 Forward lunge with arms overhead.

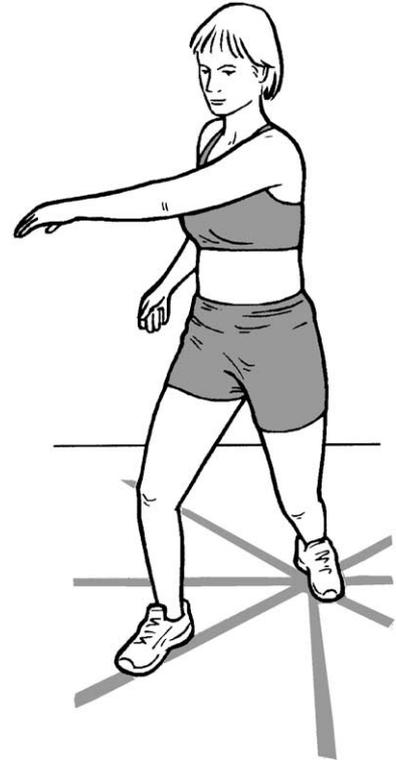


Fig. 3 Angle lunge with arm reach.

maintain balance and keep your lower back straight,

- return to the starting position.

Repetitions: 8–10 slowly.

Frequency: twice a day (Fig. 2).

Angle lunge with arm reach

Function: This exercise helps to improve your balance, flexibility and coordination during pushing, punching, throwing, tennis, and golf activities.

Your starting position:

- stand facing straight ahead with your arms at your side,
- imagine you are in the middle of a clock face facing towards 12:00.

The exercise:

- step with your right leg towards 1:00 and lower your trunk part way towards the floor,

- while you step reach your left arm across your body,
- your stride and depth is determined by your ability to maintain balance and keep your lower back straight,
- return to the starting position.

Repetitions: 8–10 slowly on both sides.

Frequency: twice a day (Fig. 3).