



# Glute Activation

Your backside is home to the largest, most powerful muscles in your body known as the glutes. The superficial muscles of the gluteal region include the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus and tensor fascia lata. They are responsible for the abduction of the leg (moving it out to the side) and extension of the leg (moving it back behind you). They also act as a support system and shock absorber for the entire body and play a major role in generating power and force in many movements.

Prolonged sitting (aka the desk job) can cause our glutes to become inactive and weaken. We can tend to “forget” how to activate your glutes.

Why are weak/inactive glutes a problem?

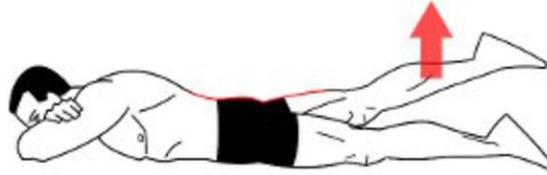
If the glutes are not doing their job of supporting the body, other muscles (mainly hamstrings, lower back and hip flexors) will come in and help out. When other muscles are helping out, the glutes continue to weaken and the vicious cycle continues. In addition, because these muscles are not designed for this purpose they get over used, tight and potentially injured (weak glutes - tight hamstrings - low back pain)

How do we fix this issue?

We need to “turn on” the glutes by learning how to activate them in isolation. Add the following three exercises to your workout routine and learn to feel the glute muscles activate. Then take this feeling to your other exercises like squats and start to pay attention to the glute muscles doing their job (i.e activating at the bottom of the squat as you push back up to standing)



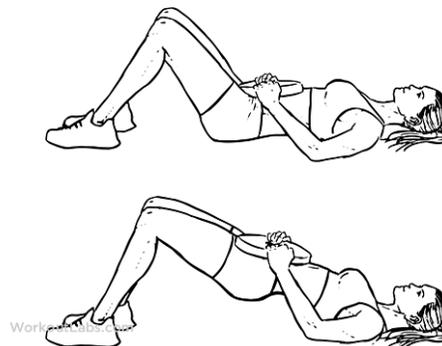
## Leg Lifts



Leg lifts target your left and right glute separately. You may notice that one side is stronger than the other.

- Lay on your stomach with your legs extending out behind you on the floor.
- Think about squeezing your left glute then lift your left leg a few inches off the ground.
- Pause at the top then lower it back down.
- The hamstrings and/or erector muscles of the spine will try to take over for the glutes during this exercise. To ensure it's the glutes initiating the work, take one hand and place a few fingers on your glute and a few on your hamstring. Make sure that you feel the glute muscle contract under your fingers before your hamstring! Complete 15 reps on one leg and then switch to the other.

## Glute Bridges



This exercise can often be where weak glutes will be “assisted” by hamstrings. We will work at correcting that.

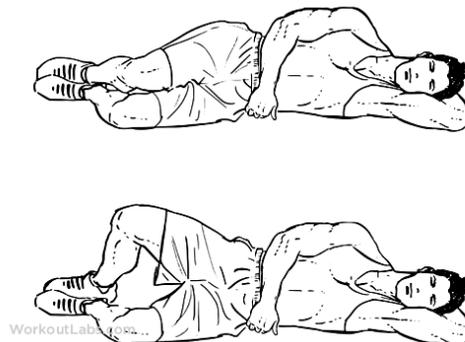
- First lay on your back with your knees bent
- Keep your core braced. And without arching your lower back, squeeze your butt muscles to get them engaged first.
- Lift your hips up while keeping your glutes contracted
- At the top, squeeze your glutes as hard as possible for about 5 seconds before coming back down



If this alone doesn't activate your glutes very well and you feel it more in your hamstrings, then you can experiment with the following cues:

- First, think about as if you were holding a \$100 bill between your butt cheeks. So, to keep that \$100, constantly squeeze your glutes throughout each rep. You want to prevent that bill from dropping.
- Thinking about driving your heels into the ground tends to activate the hamstrings more. So, think about pushing your feet away from you instead. Actively push your feet forwards as if you were trying to perform a knee extension. You can perform these with your feet against a wall if you need something to push against. What this does is it will activate the quads, and then through a concept called reciprocal inhibition, will as a result decrease the activation of the hamstrings so that the glutes are now forced to do the work.

### Clamshells



This last exercise will be used to target another important glute muscle, the gluteus medius.

- Lay on your side with your knees and hips bent
- Use one arm to make a pillow for your head
- With your other hand, place your thumb on the bone in the front of your hip. Wrap your other fingers around and overtop the upper part of your butt. This muscle is the glute medius, and you want to feel this muscle working as you do the following movement.
- Next, while keeping your feet together and core braced, open up your top knee like a clam shell so that the knee of your upper leg rises towards the ceiling.
- It's important that you avoid rotating your hips as you open up your top knee by maintaining that abdominal bracing. Again, you should feel the glute medius contracting with your fingers as you perform each rep.
- Complete 3 sets of 10 reps on each side. As you progress and get stronger you can increase the difficulty by adding a mini band around your legs, just above the knees.