

Glute Strengthening Exercises

Here is a list of exercises that I tend to gravitate to for my running patients. By no means is this a complete list or are these the only exercises that I use. When coming up with a treatment program, every runner has individual needs to help them achieve their goal of getting back to running. However, over the years, these seem to be ones that I have prescribed consistently. Enjoy and contact me with any questions!

- **Clamshells:** A lot of runners have heard of, or even performed this exercise before. Why do I like this exercise? Because when performed correctly, I feel it is great to help individuals activate (wake up) their glutes. By no means do I think this a functional strengthening exercise for runners, rather a good foundation starting point.
 - o **How to perform:** Lie on your side with your knees in a C-shaped position. You then want to rotate your hips forward as if to have your lateral glutes face up towards the ceiling (this is a VERY IMPORTANT step, as if you are stacked or rotated too far back, you would be substituting with another muscle called your TFL, which could be leading to other issues). Then you want to lift your top knee, like a clam opening a shell, keeping your heels together, but don't allow hips to rotate back. Then control knee back to starting position. Should feel work in deep lateral glute muscles.



- **Double Leg Bridge:** I feel bridges are an essential exercise for any runner as they target multiple core muscles needed for runners, and we can build variations off of them to progress.
 - o **How to perform:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Keep feet and knees shoulder width apart. I tend to put a looped theraband around the thigh to activate glute more and stimulate the hip abduction and external rotation component of its contraction. Brace your abdominal muscles, squeeze your glute muscles, as if holding a walnut between your cheeks then lift ~3-4 inches off the ground. Don't go too high, as you don't want to over arch the low back. Hold, then control lowering just before you are going to hit the ground, then rise again. Push through your heels, which can stimulate more glute activation.



- **Quadruped hip extension:** This exercise works on the extensor mechanism of the glute max as well as a good general core activation. A good precursor to standing hip extension.
 - o **How to perform:** Go into a hands and knees position with shoulders over hands and hips over knees. Brace abdominal wall by drawing belly button up to spine, but do not over round back. Imagine a cup of water is on the lower back and you do not want to knock it off. Lift one leg up and back as if pushing it into a wall behind you (don't drop that cup of water). Don't lift too high, as if to over arch your back. Lower back to starting position and alternate legs. To progress, alternate arm and leg



- **Side stepping with band:** Starting to get functional and getting into a standing position. When done correctly, this one really burns the lateral glute muscles.
 - o **How to perform:** Find a long hallway or imagine a straight line drawn down a room. Square feet and toes up to line and keep them in a neutral position. Put a band around ankles (harder) or above knees (easier). Get into a hip hinge position (partial squat). Lead with your hip to step to the side and control the other leg as you side step. Always keep tension on the band. Important not to let your feet turn out (substitute with your TFL) or allow your trunk to shift side to side (substitute with your back muscles). Also, don't allow knees to cave in.



- **Single leg stance with hip hinge:** Yes, you are standing on one leg, but important foundation exercise before progressing to more dynamic single leg stance movements.
 - o **How to perform:** I encourage you to perform barefoot as to keep a dome in the arch of your foot to work your foot intrinsic muscles. Get into a hip hinge position, think about if you had a tail and were sticking it out and slightly leaning trunk forward. Load onto one leg and lift the other leg up behind you. Do not allow knee to cave inwards, foot arch to fall or pelvis to drop. Advance to doing this on unstable surfaces (i.e., balance pad, flat side of BOSU, round side of BOSU).



- **Single leg hip abduction with band:** Now add more dynamic movement to the leg that is up in the air. When done correctly, the stance leg will be the one doing most of the work, and you should feel a lot of burn on the lateral glutes.
 - o **How to perform:** Get into single leg balance position as stated in “Single leg stance with hip hinge” exercise. Put band around ankle (harder) or above knees (easier). With leg in the air, move in controlled manner out and back as if skating trying not to let it touch the ground. With stance leg, do not let pelvis drop, foot arch to drop, knee to cave in or excessive side bending in the trunk. It is not as much as how far to move the leg out, rather control leg without losing single leg balance.



- **Single leg squat with hip hinge:** Yes, running is all one leg motion, so let's work out with one leg! Single leg squats are great, and not many runners can perform them without good control. They actually have one of the highest EMG (electromyography, test that measures electrical activity of muscles) outputs for the glute med than any other exercise. Take that clamshells!
 - o **How to perform:** Can be a good guide to have a chair or stool behind you. Start in a single leg stance position. Then hinge at the hip, as if you are trying to get your glutes to touch the back of the chair. The idea is to hinge at the hip and not round at the spine. Also, you do not want the knee to cave in or go too far forward over your toes. Start with a partial squat, higher surface, and if you get stronger, work to a lower surface. Do not let knee cave in, pelvis to drop or pelvis to shoot out to the side.



- **Single leg squat with alternate leg wall push:** This is a great exercise to get all the muscles to work that a single leg squat does, but fire the lateral glutes more on the leg that is on the ground.
 - o **How to perform:** Go near an open wall space with the wall on one side. Get into a single leg squat with hip hinge position and other leg against wall or physio ball. Perform a single leg squat with hip hinge as stated above, but with leg against wall, push out against the wall at the same time while performing the squat. You will feel much more work in the lateral glutes.



- **Single leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL):** This is both a great glute and hamstring exercises, but again performed in a single leg position.
 - o **How to perform:** Again, start with a single leg stance position with slight hip hinge. Tip the body forward and leg back as if picking an object up off the ground. The hinging should happen at the hip, not the back, as you want to keep a spinal neutral position. Also, you are keeping the stance leg still, not going into a squat. Go down with control as far as you can (some of us with tight hamstring go until you feel a stretch in the hamstrings), then control yourself back to the starting position by squeezing glutes.



- **Single leg Bridge:** This is a progression from the double leg bridge to advance to when that gets easy. Again, since running is a single leg activity, we are doing single leg strengthening.
 - o **How to perform:** Start in the position as stated for the double leg bridge. With one of the legs, extend at the knee and keep knee straight as well as shoulder width. I still like to perform with the band around your thighs. You will tighten abdominals, squeeze your glutes and push through your heel raising up 3-4 inches off the floor, then control down to almost tap the ground and repeat. Important to try and keep pelvis parallel and not let it drop.

