

# Well Worth it

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### Health and Fitness

#### *You Should Squat!*

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While many are told by doctors, physical therapists, even trainers that squatting is dangerous and they should be avoided, there are some real physiological consequences that must be faced when following such short sighted advice. First and foremost, when it comes to squatting, if you can't - you must! Having spent 18 years of my life in the fields of orthopedic rehabilitation and sports conditioning, I can assure you that anyone who was injured performing a squat movement and did not learn to squat correctly and/or develop adequate strength in the pattern is but a re-injury waiting to happen! Just look at what it takes to get into your car - you must open the door and perform the equivalent of a single legged squat with a lateral shift and a twist, particularly if you own a sports car. All the while, you are being told to avoid an opportunity to reestablish optimal motor skills and strength in what can surely be considered key movement pattern in anyone's life, even today!

Whenever you injure yourself, an electrical charge is created in the injured tissues; often referred to as the healing current of injury. This is one of the mechanisms by which the body knows where to send the repair materials. Within 24 hours, fibroblast cells start laying down collagen, being guided by micro-currents called streaming potentials. Movement of the injured tissues initially stimulates the production of such micro-currents and they guide incoming fibroblasts as to how to align the new collagen fibers in the healing wound. Therefore, from a wound healing perspective, it is important for anyone that has been injured while performing a squatting activity to begin carefully loading the tissues in as close a pattern as possible to that of the injury; any personal trainer can safely instruct you. Failure to return to squatting as soon as possible only results in a weak wound repair and a greater likelihood that you will injure yourself again, when you have to squat and least expect it!

#### **EVERYONE BENEFITS FROM BREATHING SQUATS**

Digestion and elimination are further facilitated by the full squat as a result of both pressure changes in the abdominal and thoracic cavities and improved motility of organs. Whenever you repeatedly perform the full squat, a pressure wave is created by the thighs compressing the abdominal viscera and by the action of the diaphragm as you breathe. This pressure wave coupled with the mechanical action of the thighs literally mobilizes the viscera and pumps blood and lymphatic fluids as well as mechanically aiding the intestinal system. By using "Breathing Squats", you can also facilitate the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The PNS is also called the anabolic or digestive nervous system because it regulates these activities.

Try some breathing squats: Standing with good upright posture, take a deep belly breath and simply begin the squat from the hip, lowering yourself as far as possible (no load on the body!) or until your torso rests on your thighs. As you lower your body, slowly release the air through your nose; take four seconds to lower your body as you breath out. At the bottom of the squat (torso resting on thighs if you can), pause for a second and begin inhaling through your nose. Make sure that you rise for four seconds, with a brief pause at the top before breathing in as you lower for the next four count. As you become more efficient, slow the squat down to six, or even eight seconds. Slower squats will be even more energizing to the body, as slow movements allow chi (also called Prana or life-force energy) to move faster through the body. Try starting your day with a few minutes of breathing squats and build up to as many as 100 in a row. Progress slowly so you don't get muscle soreness and so do them in a quiet area where you can relax and focus on your breathing. In just a few days, you will notice improved vitality and, you may find your bowel habits improving too!

### Healthy Eating

#### *Vegetarian Diets*

Some people choose to follow a vegetarian diet, which means they eat mostly plant-based foods (grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds). There are several different forms of vegetarian diets:

- Vegans, or total vegetarians, eat only plant foods. They do not eat red meat, poultry, fish, milk products, eggs, or other foods that come from animals, such as honey and gelatin.
- Lacto-vegetarians include milk products-such as milk, cheese, and yogurt-in their diet.
- Lacto-ovo vegetarians include milk products and eggs in their diets.
- Semi-vegetarians may include poultry and fish in their diets, but they do not eat red meat.

If properly planned, vegetarian diets are healthy and can provide all the nutrients a person needs. As a group, vegetarians have:

- Lower cholesterol levels.
- Lower body mass indexes.
- Less risk of dying from coronary artery disease (CAD).
- Less risk of getting high blood pressure.
- Less risk of getting prostate or colorectal cancer.
- Less risk of getting type 2 diabetes.

When considering a vegetarian diet, many people are concerned that they will not get enough protein. This nutrient is made of building blocks called amino acids. Although the human body can make some of these amino acids, nine of them (the essential amino acids) must be obtained from food. Animal sources of protein (milk, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, and seafood) contain all the essential amino acids in the amounts our bodies need.

Plant foods contain the essential amino acids in varying amounts, so vegetarians need to eat a variety of plant foods to make sure they get enough of all nine essential amino acids. For example, legumes (cooked dried beans, dried peas, and lentils) are low in sulfur-containing amino acids (such as methionine), but they are high in another amino acid called lysine. Grains are just the opposite. So if you eat both foods during the course of a day, you can get all the essential amino acids your body needs. When the amino acids from two or more foods add up to make a complete protein, those foods are called "complementary proteins". Examples of complementary proteins are: beans and tortillas, black beans and rice, chili and corn bread, pita bread with hummus (ground garbanzo beans and sesame seed paste).

You can fit a vegetarian diet into the dietary guidelines quite easily:

**Eat a variety of foods.** Include whole grains and a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Use soy products, legumes, nuts, and seeds to replace meat and, if desired, dairy products and eggs. **Choose plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits.** Use foods closest to their natural state, fresh and unprocessed, and minimize your intake of heavily processed foods. **Choose foods moderate in fat and low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol.** If you eat animal foods, such as dairy products and eggs, choose lower-fat versions of these foods. Try not to use these foods as your main sources of protein, because they may replace plant sources of protein in your diet-such as legumes, nuts, and seeds-which contribute the iron you need. **Choose beverages and foods that limit your sugar intake.** Minimize your intake of highly sweetened and heavily processed foods.

Vegans need to include a source of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> (fortified foods or a supplement) in their diets. They also need to include a source of vitamin D if their exposure to sunlight is limited. People who live in the northern half of the United States do not get enough sun exposure during the winter months.

# Keeping It Real

## How To Get Rid of Love Handles

Forget the Infomercials, here are the real keys to getting your abs in shape and how to get rid of love handles. Remember all those infomercials about the Ab Buster, Blaster, Basher, or whatever it is? You know, the ones with those trim, tight, and flat-stomached models doing a few reps and showing off their midsections. The implication, of course, was that these people got their outstanding abs by using whatever machine it was they were hocking. Forget it.

I'll tell you straight: the biggest issues in getting your abs in top condition are as always:

- Intelligent training
- Diet
- Supplementation.
- Start With Cardio

Get rid of the layer of fat covering your abs first. When you lower your body fat percentage, your abs will appear more chiseled and defined. To get the abs up to shape, you'll want to do about 30 minutes of cardio work 3 or 4 times a week. Some great choices for cardio are:

- Circuit Weight Training
- Tennis
- Brisk Walking
- Bicycling
- Running
- Basketball
- Racquetball
- Even House or Yard Work!

**Pick an exercise you actually enjoy doing.** That way you'll stick to it until it becomes a habit you won't want to give up!



### Eat Small, Frequent Meals

Be sure to eat small frequent meals every 3 or 4 hours. When you're trying to lose fat you may want to skip meals to reduce your caloric intake, but a better--and easier--way to cut calories is to eat smaller meals more frequently. This keeps your metabolism running high. Don't wait until you're hungry to eat! This not only leads to overeating, but you end up overeating the wrong kinds of foods. Do carry meal replacement bars and shakes in your car or at work. They are a great way to get nutrition and fill you up between meals. Our most popular meal replacement shakes and protein bars are low in carbs and come in delicious flavors. Don't let your mini-meals come from the snack machine. Often these over processed choices are high in fat and calories and have little nutritional value. Opt for whole foods instead. Do bring small containers of healthy snacks to work. Granolas, raw vegetables to crunch on, even hard-boiled eggs are some great choices. Try bringing a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread with some fresh crisp greens. Most brands of canned and instant soups now come in low sodium varieties, and they fill you up without having a lot of calories.

**If your abs are not burning, you're not working them!**

# Did You Know ???

## The Truth About Counting Calories

By Frances Largeman, R.D.

Atkins supporters would say that you don't need to worry about the calories you eat — as long as they don't come from carbs. Dietitians and other weight-loss experts know the truth: calories in equal calories out. In other words, if you eat more calories than your body uses, they will be stored as fat. It's true that different energy sources have varying amounts of calories. Here's the breakdown:

- 1 gram of carbohydrates equals four calories
- 1 gram of protein equals four calories
- 1 gram of fat equals nine calories
- 1 gram of alcohol equals seven calories

Though carbs and protein are only half as caloric as fat, you can't eat them with wild abandon. The best plan is to eat a healthy mix of all three energy sources. Approximately 45-60 percent of calories should come from carbohydrates, 15-20 percent should be protein and the remaining 25 to 35 percent can come from fat (mostly from monounsaturated sources).

One way to keep track of the calories you eat is by keeping a food diary. Most dietitians recommend a food and activity diary as the first step toward getting a handle on how many calories you consume. Try keeping track of what you eat, drink and how you exercise for at least three days, including a weekend day. Be completely honest and write down the cookie you shared with a friend or the leftover PB&J sandwich you finished from your son's plate. You'll be surprised when you start to see the "hidden" sources of calories that you're eating.



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