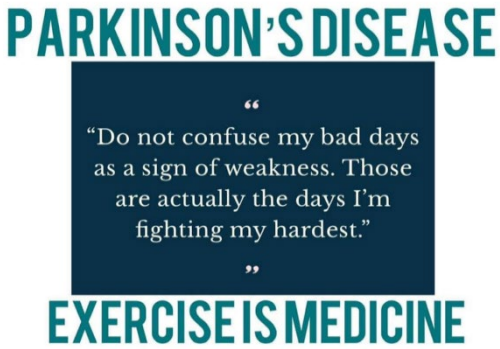
FOUNDATION for Parkinson's
Empowering people to move

Hamil Kerr Challenge
Bike/Run/Walk

April 27, 2025

Did you hear about the man who had to quit his job as a weightlifter because he wasn't strong enough?

He handed in his "too weak" notice yesterday.



Click the icon for a kick-butt workout with Coach Betsy:

HKC Strength Class

HKC Parkinson's Fitness Class

How to Make Squats Easier on Your Knees

You can still work out, even if your joints aren't what they once were.

Most exercise scientists today say the squat is one of the most beneficial exercises you can do as you age. Just think about all the ways we squat throughout the day: grabbing dish soap from under the sink, crouching to hug your children and even sitting down on the toilet.

"We probably do hundreds of squats a day," said Christopher M. Powers, a professor of physical therapy at the University of Southern California. Some even say it's fundamental to how we move.

But what if you suffer from chronic knee pain and the thought of squatting makes you wince? Can you still do the exercise safely?

It turns out, most people can effectively squat while navigating all sorts of issues, like kneecap pain, arthritis, meniscus tears, ligament and tendon strains and postoperative recovery, said Jarlo Ilano, a physical therapist in Seattle.

The key, he said, is to find ways to adjust your form that take stress off the knees, then to gradually get stronger and rely on those adjustments less. A recent research review, for example, found several adjustments that can decrease knee pain for people struggling with arthritis and recent A.C.L. damage.

Finding the right adjustments may take some trial and error. For one person, simply squatting with a wider stance may provide relief; others might want a wider stance and an outward toe rotation. Try one adjustment at a time first, then see if some combination provides more relief.

Here are four form adjustments for the most common knee woes that experts recommend for comfier body-weight squats.

Shallow(er) Squat - Recommended for: Patellofemoral pain (kneecap pain), osteoarthritis, post-A.C.L. reconstruction surgery

Video

It could be helpful to have an object to sit toward, like a chair, to give you an idea of how low you're going, said Dr. Howard Luks, an orthopedic sports medicine surgeon in New York and author of "Longevity ... Simplified."

Forward Torso Lean - Recommended for: Patellofemoral pain (kneecap pain), osteoarthritis, post-A.C.L. reconstruction surgery

Video

In a typical squat, with the top half of your body in an upright position, your knees and quads take the brunt of your body weight. But in this version, you lean your torso and arms forward, and sit your butt back, which lessens the strain on the knees.

One caveat: This is not recommended for people who suffer from lower back pain, because it can create strain on the lumbar spine and cause injury, Dr. Powers said.

Outward Toe Rotation - Recommended for: Patellofemoral pain (kneecap pain), post-A.C.L. reconstruction surgery

Video

Turning the toes outward by about 30 degrees can prevent the knees from buckling toward each other, and will minimize unwanted pressure on the inner side of the joints. Pointing your feet out more than 45 degrees may cause you to lose your balance, so find an angle that feels stable for you.

However, if you have arthritis, an outward toe rotation can be particularly uncomfortable. Talk to your physical therapist or surgeon for advice.

Wide Stance - Recommended for: Patellofemoral pain (kneecap pain)

Video

Physical therapists often recommend strengthening the butt muscles to help support the knees in the squat. One way to do this is to widen your stance.

Step your feet shoulder width (or more) apart, which will activate your gluteal muscles more. For more of a challenge, put a resistance band around your thighs. Avoid stepping out more than 1.5 times your shoulder width, though, which can cause your knees to collapse in and trigger more joint pain.

What comes next

As your quads, hips and knees get stronger through practice, you may find over time that you can squat deeper and with less knee pain. Check in with yourself every four weeks to see how far you've come. And once you start to feel confident with these adjustments, you can try other ways of squatting that may previously have irritated your knees. However, be patient and don't force any range of motion that feels too painful for you, Mr. Ilano said.

Some minor knee soreness may be normal when training, Dr. Luks said. You might even add some lightweight dumbbells. But if at any point, you feel pain that causes you to place.

most of your weight on one leg, or is accompanied by swelling, locking (when you're unable to bend or straighten the knee) or limping, it's time to see a medical professional, he added.

By Adele Jackson-Gibson / Photographs and Video by Gritchelle Fallesgon

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

~Monday, 11am Hamil-Kerr Strength class (zoom)
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81028088770

~Saturday 11am Hamil-Kerr Parkinson's Fitness (zoom) Coach Betsy

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81028088770

~Thursday, 3pm Zoom PD Spin, Ragsdale YMCA

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81028088770

~Thursday, 12pm In Person PD Spin, Spears YMCA

~ In-person Parkinson's Spin Class at YWCA of Highpoint
Tuesday and Thursday- 12:00-1:00
~In-person Parkinson's Spin Class at Ragsdale YMCA
Tuesday and Thursday- 10:15

In-Person Tai Chi with Michele
Michele's 1pm Tai Chi class takes place on the first and third Wednesday of every month at Michele's beautiful new studio - ProActive Therapy and Wellness, - 6579 Lake Brandt Rd, Summerfield

~Rock Steady Boxing - Greensboro (in person)
~Rock Steady Boxing of Archdale (in person)

~A.C.T. By Prince Deese

~For information on in-person 1:1 training in your home, contact Alesia Pendleton pendleton.alesia@gmail.com

~Parkinson's Stretch Class at Rock Steady Boxing, Greensboro (spouses welcome)- Friday at 11:30am

~Will Powell- 336-706-0271

ONLINE RESOURCES

~Michael J Fox Foundation: www.michaeljfox.org

~Davis Phinney Foundation: Live Well with Parkinson's TODAY - Davis Phinney Foundation

~Parkinson's & Movement Disorders Alliance: www.pmdalliance.org

~Parkinson's Association of the Carolinas: www.parkinsonassociation.org

~Michael J Fox Foundation: www.michaeljfox.org

~Davis Phinney Foundation: Live Well with Parkinson's TODAY - Davis Phinney Foundation

~Parkinson's & Movement Disorders Alliance: www.pmdalliance.org

~Parkinson's Association of the Carolinas: www.parkinsonassociation.org

And of course, reach out to me anytime.
Yours, Coach B

Rock Steady Boxing Certified Coach
Certified Parkinson's Disease Fitness Specialist
ISSA Certified Personal Trainer