

Strengthen Your Knees

June 20th, 2020

PIRIFORMIS STRETCH ON A CHAIR



- Sit upright in a chair with a flat back.
- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot (push through the heel).
- Begin to lean forward keeping the natural arches in the back (meaning don't round forward and collapse your chest).
- If the lower back begins to round backwards, stop. You have gone to far. Go back to a point where you can keep the curve in the lower back and breathe here.

TFL Leg Lift



- Stand with the feet parallel and look down at your ankles. Line up your toes on a floor board or the edge of a mat.
- Lift the right leg sideways and up keeping the toes in the same line as the leg goes out to the side.
- Don't lift the leg too high off the floor.
- Internally rotate the lifted leg. You are hoping that the muscles of the lifted leg are doing the work.
- Do both sides.

STANDING IT BAND STRETCH



- Cross your right ankle of the left ankle while standing. Try to line up the pinky toes as close as possible.
- Bend forward and pay attention to keeping the hyperextension out of the left knee.
- Reach your hands towards the floor or towards a block or blocks.
- Pull the right hip back if possible to go deeper.
- Repeat on the other side.

Standing Psoas Stretch



This is a classic standing stretch that also happens to be a deep stretch of the psoas—if it is done correctly. Feel free to use the wall to support yourself.

- Bend your right leg behind you and take hold of the right foot or ankle with your right hand. Bring your knees in line with one another, keeping the heel in line with your sit bone. If your outer hip is very tight it won't be easy to keep the knees in line.
- Keep the pelvis and shoulders facing forward and upright the whole time.
- Pull the right leg behind you while keeping the pelvis, shoulders and trunk facing forward.

Keep the pelvic floor and the low belly strong as you try to pull the leg behind you through the balanced action of the inner and outer thigh. If you have tight hips, it will be difficult to keep the legs aligned as you draw the right leg back. The knee will pull sideways, and it is imperative that you keep the legs in line. This is an issue with the iliotibial tract, or IT band, not the psoas, but as we know, everything is connected (no pun intended).

Standing Pigeon



- Check your left foot for parallel. Cross your right ankle over the left knee.
- Keep the pelvis and shoulders facing forward. Your knee opens only as far as the pelvis points forward.
- Squat tracking the knee over the ankle.
- Stand back up putting weight into the left big toe.

BLOCK LUNGES



- Positioned on your hands and knees, step the right foot forward in between your hands. Use two blocks under your hands by your front foot.
- Place a third block underneath the quadriceps muscle of the back leg just above the knee, at the base of the thigh.
- Tuck the back toes and let the weight of the body fall onto the block. Do your best to keep the heel of the back foot pointing straight up toward the ceiling.
- The front leg and hip should not be under any strain. Feel free to make adjustments, turning the foot out or stepping the foot wider.
- You need to stay for 90 seconds to get the full benefits of this pose. But not longer.

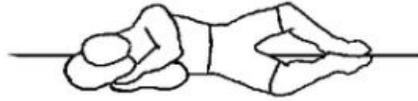
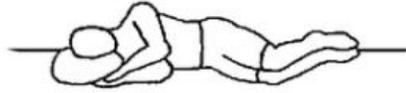
FROG

BELLY



- Lay on your stomach. Bend your knees wide out to the side, bringing the soles of the feet together in mid-air.
- The hip bones of the pelvis should be on the floor determining the height of the feet.
- They might be high off the floor. That indicates tight hips. If the feet flop to the floor you might be too loose.
- Draw the knees as high and wide as possible.
- You might feel this in a number of places but often it is the in top of the quadriceps at where the leg meets the pelvis.

CLAM SHELLS



- Start by lying on your left side, with your knees bent and the right leg on top of the left with the feet together.
- Maintain a neutral spine, engaging your abdominals if you need to.
- Stack the hips and don't let the top hip move backwards. You can even cheat the top hip forward. It is important to differentiate between the leg and the pelvis and not let them move in the same direction.
- From this position, raise your knee slowly engaging gluteus medius. Keep the pelvis and trunk stable. Hold the top position for 5 seconds.
- Lower slowly for five seconds.
- Another option is to raise the top knee slowly, hold for five seconds and then lower slowly only about half way maintaining an active muscle.
- You want to activate gluteus medius and any way that happens for you is the best way.

Wall Squats



- Stand with your back against a wall, your feet about shoulder-width apart. The distance the feet are from the wall determine how hard you make the pose
- Slowly bend your knees, and keep your back and pelvis against the wall.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Build up to 2 or 3 minutes.
- You are ultimately trying to get the thighs parallel to the floor.

SQUATTIN

G



- Stand up straight with feet shoulder's-width apart or slightly wider.
- It is okay to turn the feet out keeping the knees in line with the ankle. Make sure that the feet are turned out equally and not too much. Feel free to hold onto a chair as you begin to explore this exercise
- Slowly and steadily bend your knees and flex your hips to lower your butt toward the floor. Don't let your knees move forward of the toes. You are trying to squat down backwards.
- Don't worry about how far down you can go at first. Work on maintained alignment and a pain free descent.
- Lower down to the best of your ability and hold for five breaths. Try to increase this over time to 25 breaths.
- An advanced variation is to isolate and engage your pelvic floor muscles while squatting. In this version you try to tone the levator ani (a thick muscle at the top of the pelvic floor).

Reverse Lunge



- Stand at the front of your mat.
- Take a step backward with your left foot, lowering down and touching the left knee lightly to the floor (if it makes it that far) while applying as little pressure to the knee as possible.
- Make sure the right knee stays positioned directly over the ankle.
- Return to standing by pressing through your inner foot, and bringing your left leg forward.
- Switch legs, stepping back with the right leg.
- Start with a set of 5. Build to a set of 10.

Straight Leg Raises



- Lie down on your back with your knee bent and feet flat to the floor
- Straighten one leg and tighten the muscles on that leg by trying to contract your quadriceps.
- Keep your quad tightened, and then slowly lift the leg six inches off the floor.
- Hold for three seconds.
- Slowly lower your leg to the floor.
- Relax and repeat 10 more times.

BRIDGE W/ EXTENDED LEG



- Lie on your back with the knees bent and the feet flat on the floor.
- Ground yourself through the whole foot with extra attention to the inner foot and lift the hips up off the floor.
- Extend your right shin keeping the thighs in line.
- Replace the right foot and extend the left shin.
- Do it again without lowering down in between.
- Build up to a set of five

Locust



- Lie on your stomach with your arms alongside your trunk, and your forehead resting on the floor. Point your feet.
- Do your best to lift your legs off of the floor.
- Keep your feet pointed and your legs parallel.
- Keep your abdominal muscles engaged so the muscles of the lower back lengthen instead of shorten.
- Lengthen the back of the neck as you extend the whole back of the body and strengthen the hamstrings as you lift your legs off the floor.
- Placing a rolled up blanket under the tops of the thighs makes this easier.

Block Between the Thighs



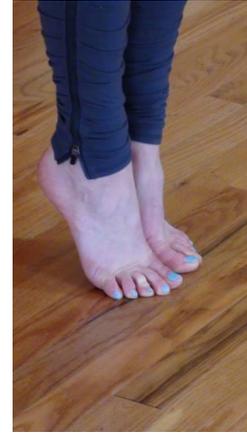
- Lay on your back with the knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Place a block between your inner thighs. Engage and isolate the inner thigh muscles against the block. Use the quadriceps and outer thighs as little as possible.
- Don't grip your buttocks.
- Lift the hips up and continue to squeeze the block, drawing the low belly in to stabilize the spine.
- Hold for a count of 10 breaths. Try to hold longer as you feel stronger. Hold for less if you need to. See if you can build up staying for 3-5 minutes.

Deep Calf Stretch



- Roll up a mat or blanket.
- Stand with your feet parallel, your heels on the floor and the balls of your feet as high up the roll as possible.
- Bend your knees softly and lift all ten toes. Keeping your knees aligned over your ankles, bow forward. Have support for your hands if necessary. (A block, or even a chair).
- Stay in this position for a minute or longer.
- Keeping the knees over the ankles, try to bring weight to the inner foot. Lifting your toes will help keep your arches from collapsing.

Calf Raises



- Stand in bare feet. Keep your big toes together and the heels slightly apart.
- Lift your heels up off the floor balancing on the balls of your feet. Keep the weight to the inside of the foot doing your best to activate the fibularis muscles at the outside of the calf.
- Before you come down try to lift a little bit higher and then lower your heels.

Hamstring Curls



- Stand with the feet parallel. You can hold onto a chair in front of you if need be.
- Bend the right leg lifting the heel as close to the butt as possible
- Repeat 10x
- Bend the same leg and hold the heel as close to the butt as possible. Let go and try to keep the heel in the same position.
- Repeat 3x.

Inner Thigh Leg Raises



- Lay on your left side with the right knee bent and the right foot flat on the floor in back of the left thigh.
- Lift the extended left leg about 8-10 inches off of the floor.
- Stabilize the pelvis and spine with core muscles and isolate the inner thigh muscle.
- If all of the work seems to be in the thigh and hip bend the knee a little. Make sure to stabilize the pelvis and spine.

TFL Leg Raises



- Lie on one side with your legs stacked. You can bend the bottom leg for support.
- Engage the top leg and raise it to between 30 & 45 degrees.
- Hold for 5 seconds, lower and relax briefly, then repeat 10x.
- Internally rotate your upper leg slightly toward the floor as you raise it.
- Do both sides

Warrior III



Stand with the feet hip distance apart and parallel.

- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot strongly (push through the heel).
- Begin to squat. Think about lowering down backwards more than leaning forward. Stick the butt out.
- If you can bring the forearms onto the right shin, place them there and hold.
- Ideally the right shin is parallel to both the front of your mat and the floor.
- Breath.
- Change sides.

Standing bird dogs



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bend the left leg behind you bringing the left shin parallel to the floor and keeping the left ankle aligned with the knee.
- Slowly lower your body forward reaching for the floor with the right hand.
- Keep your back straight, and your standing knee pointed in the same direction as your foot.
- Descend as far as you can.
- Pause.
- Slowly push up from your inner foot, extending your leg.
- Straighten your leg.
- Repeat on the other leg.

BINDING & SLIDING



- Place a block between your feet and a block between your inner thighs.
- Keep the big toes on the block and do your best to pull your heels slightly away from the block.
- Belt the calves as tight as you can, a couple of inches below the knee around the meat of the calf muscle.
- Draw the knees towards your chest keeping your heels on the floor. Extend the legs back out.
- Try to keep your feet even, pressing through the inner foot and drawing the outer foot back.
- The emphasis on the exercise is inner thigh, outer calf, and mound of the big toe on the inner foot.