

Fitness Forum: Giving the exercise ball a role in your routine

by CNS

The moves: Performing a bridge maneuver while the back is supported on a ball with the feet moving.

ON A ROLL - Using a stability ball to strengthen core muscles, firefighter Piper Denlinger moves from sitting upright to a horizontal position, with head and upper back on the ball and trunk rigid. CNS Photo by Nadia Scott Borowski. Works on: Abdominal strength and control, hip, glutes and hamstring strength.

Setup: Choose a ball the proper height; when sitting on it, the knees should be slightly below hip height. Sit on the ball with hands on your hips. Put a slight arch in your lower back and tighten the abdominals to maintain it during the entire exercise.

Steps: Begin by walking the feet outward and simultaneously leaning back with a rigid trunk as the ball rolls from the buttocks to the shoulder blades. Pause for a three count. Return to the starting position by reversing the actions. All movement is slow and controlled.

Repetitions: Three sets of 10-15 repetitions.

Precautions: Do not lift the head; keep it in line with the trunk. Do not hold your breath. Do not let the ball move past the shoulder blades to the neck, as this puts too much stress on the cervical spine.

Options: For more of a challenge, try doing the exercise with one or both arms over the head. Or try lifting one leg off the ground during the pause of the move.

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