

Fitness Forum: Strengthen the hamstring and gluteal muscles

by CNS

The moves: Performing hamstring curls in a bridge position with the feet on an exercise ball.

ADDRESSING THE HAMSTRING - - Firefighter Jeffrey Butkowski performed bridges with his legs and hips off the floor and his feet on a stability ball. CNS Photo by Nadia Borowski Scott. Works on: Hamstring and gluteal strength, abdominal control and trunk stabilization.

Setup: Lie on your back on the ground with an exercise ball near your feet. Tighten the abdominals and flatten your lower back against the ground. Stabilize the back in this position throughout the exercise. Lift the legs one at a time and place the feet on top of the ball with the knees slightly bent. Push the feet down into the ball and bridge up until the hips are off the ground. Pull the ball toward the buttocks by bending the knees between 45 and 90 degrees; hold, then straighten the legs again.

Repetitions: Do as many hamstring curls in the bridge position as you can, then lower down to the ground for a rest.

Precautions: Do not let the lower back move out of the starting flat position. Do not bridge too high, as this will put too much stress on the neck. Do not hold your breath.

Options: Only do the bridging move if the hamstring curls are too difficult. For more challenge, progress to a one-leg bridge and two-leg curl; and to a single-leg bridge and curl.

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