Fitness Forum: Stretch strengthens legs, but start slowly

by CNS

THE MOVE: Side lunge.

SQUAT AND LUNGE - To strengthen the legs and hips while stretching the groin, firefighter Nancy Shuster squats down and lunges to the side, keeping the knee directly over the ankle. CNS Photo by Nadia Borowski Scott. WORKS ON: Strengthening the lower extremities and dynamic stretching of the groin.

SETUP: Start in a standing position with hands on your hips.

STEPS: Initiate the move by taking your hips back slightly as if you were going to sit in a chair. Take a large step to the right with the leg turned slightly to the outside. Squat down over the right leg until the thigh is parallel to the floor. Ensure the right knee is in line and directly over the ankle, not in front of it. Tighten the thigh muscles of the left leg and keep it fully straight to maximize the groin stretch. Keep the head and eyes up. The torso is centered over the pelvis. Hold the position three to five seconds. Repeat to the other side.

REPETITIONS: Start with one set of 10 to each side. Progress to three to five sets of 10.

PRECAUTIONS: Progress slowly with the step-length and depth of lunge because these dynamic movements may make you sore initially. Ensure the toes are slightly turned out and the knee and thigh are in line with them. Sit back more if your knee tends to get in front of the ankle.

OPTIONS: Hold dumbbells to make it more challenging.

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