

Fitness Forum: Squat aids balance; improves strength in legs, hips

by CNS

The moves: A squat performed in a forward/backward stance with one leg on a ball.

SPLIT SQUAT - Firefighter Patricia Stone performs a forward split squat with her back leg moving back and forth on a stability ball. CNS Photo by Nadia Borowski Scott. Works on: Balance, trunk stability, lower extremity strength.

Set up: Stand next to a wall with your hand on it for balance. Take an exaggerated step forward as if performing a lunge (width of the feet should remain shoulder width apart). Transfer all your weight onto the forward leg and lift the back leg onto the ball. Start with the shin on the ball and experiment for the best position.

Steps: Keep the hand on the wall if you have poor balance. Otherwise, place both hands on the hips. Keep the head and torso upright and squat down with the forward leg (do not let the forward knee move past the ankle). Keep the rear leg relatively straight and allow the ball to roll back so it moves up the shin. Weight should be equally distributed between the legs throughout. All moves are slow and controlled.

Repetitions: Three sets of 15 repetitions each side.

Precautions: Balance! Use a wall or something suitable until you are comfortable with this exercise. Do not arch the low back during the squat. Do not hold your breath.

Options: Add dumbbells for more resistance. Experiment with different leg positions on the ball for added challenge.

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