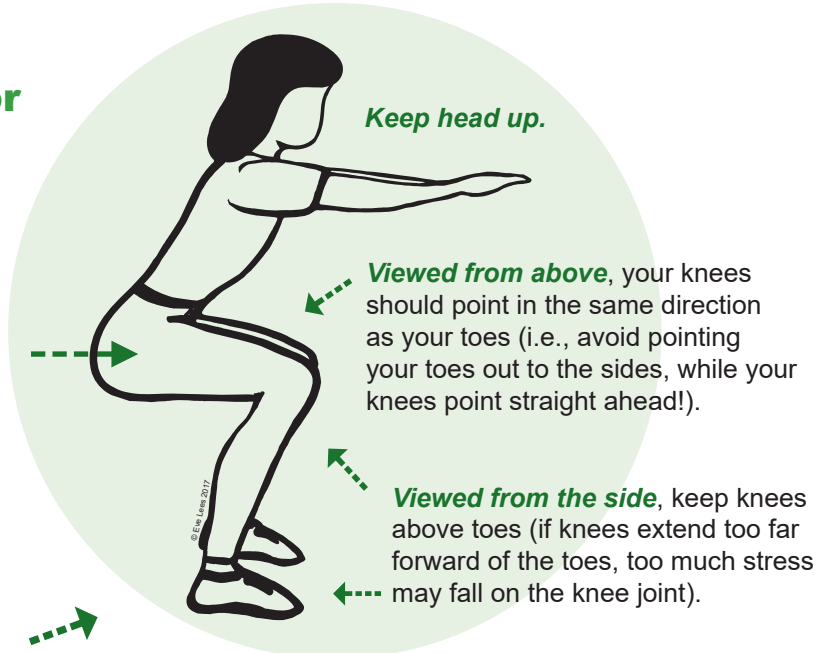


Tips for doing the 'squat' . . .

Ask a Certified Fitness Instructor for other tips

To avoid knee and low back injury and/or if you have weak knees or low back, there is no need to drop your thighs lower than parallel to the floor. Do so only if you are conditioned to do "deep squats" and/or you are very fit and need the challenge! You'll still work the lower body muscles even if you do not squat as low as is shown in the illustration.



Keep heels on the floor.

This distributes body weight evenly along the bottoms of your feet and therefore helps minimize stress on the knees. It also helps you maintain balance. If you can't keep your heels down, prop a board under them or don't go too low: Stop before your heels begin to lift.

Basic leg stretches . . .

Ask a Certified Fitness Instructor for more ideas

Stretching basics . . .

Stretching can help muscles relax after being tensed and shortened. A muscle that's relaxed won't cramp or spasm later. Stretching also improves/maintains flexibility (the range of motion of your joints).

Be more concerned doing static stretches (holding a stretch) at the end of your activity. This is the time to coax your muscles to relax after being stressed during the workout. And after exercise, when body temperature is higher, there is less chance of injuring muscle tissue when stretching.

Move into a stretch slowly – no bouncing. Hold for 20 seconds *minimum* (longer if you have time) and repeat each stretch at least twice. Breathe evenly. Do not force a stretch. Stretch only as far as you need to feel it. Never push a stretch to the point of pain. Stretching should feel good, not painful!



QUADRICEPS STRETCH (front of thigh).

Grasp your ankle and pull heel to your rear, feeling the stretch at the front of the thigh. You'll feel the stretch more if you do a 'pelvic tuck' to avoid arching your lower back. Keep your straightened, supporting leg slightly flexed (bent) at the knee. Use a countertop, wall, or chair to help with balance.



SEATED STRETCH (hamstrings and low back).

Sit on the edge of a seat and extend one leg forward, heel on the floor and toe pointing up toward the ceiling. Keeping a straight back, lean forward as far as is comfortable for you. If you are only feeling the stretch in the hamstrings but not in the lower back, you can slightly flex (bend) your leg at the knee. This stretch can also be done with both legs at the same time, while seated on the floor.