

You Can be Tough Enough

Chicago Tribune

These 5 grueling moves are challenging, but they yield great results!

It's easy to love exercises that give results fast. Do a couple of sets of biceps curls regularly and seemingly overnight the muscles in front of the upper arm pop.

Thighs and butts are another matter. When the prescription is squats or lunges, the groan quotient goes ballistic, trainers say.

Why do people hate squats and lunges? Probably because they require concentration and patience. Plus squats work the legs muscles, the biggest muscle group of the body and one of the most difficult to train, particularly for women.

So why do exercisers trudge through the tough exercises?

Because they get results.



“How each person defines ‘tough’ depends on the current state of fitness and conditioning, flexibility, biomechanics, age and experience,” said Tony Figueroa, personal training director of Gorilla Sports Chicago. “Some exercises considered ‘tough’ require compound movements of several muscles. And that movement feels strange to the novice exerciser.”

So what are the five toughest, yet most effective, exercises? We asked fitness professionals what they thought. Squats, lunges, push-ups, V-ups and pull-ups made the list.

Squats

The rewards of doing squats include developing a stronger back, abs and hamstrings as well as firmer thighs, quads and buttocks. Moving the largest muscle group takes effort and plenty of oxygen. To get results and prevent injury, squats require proper form.

“People want to take shortcuts; they are inclined to take the easy way out. But you can’t with squats,” said Derhyl Randle, a personal trainer.

Beginners especially have a tough time with squats. “They get winded because the heart beats faster, and they don’t like that feeling,” said Cornell Walker, a trainer with Phenomenal Fitness, Chicago.

After three years of training twice a week with Figueroa at Gorilla Sports, Becky Phelps still hates squats.

“If I do them right, I’m sore hours later the next day,” said the 31-year-old interior designer. But she likes the results: definition in the thighs, increased leg strength for running, a firmer butt. Such rewards come from doing three sets, 18 reps per set, on the Smith machine once a week. The machine helps her maintain balance, squat deeper and minimize any risk of injury to the back and neck.

When performing a squat, keep the chin up to maintain good form. Feet should be shoulder-width apart. Make sure to use the right amount of weight for current fitness level.

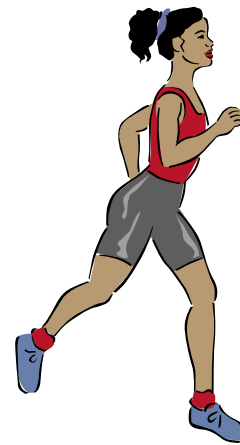
Lunges

Lunges target the buttocks, hamstrings and quads (top of the thighs). The rewards include more strength, definition and firmness in the upper legs. Lunges can be performed in both stationary (also known as one-legged squats) or walking positions.

“The difficulty (with lunges) is maintaining balance while controlling the up and down movements, and moving forward (in walking lunges),” said CC Cunningham, president of Performenhance, a training company for competitive athletes.

Resistance can be added with dumbbells or a barbell.

For a stationary lunge: Stand with legs



shoulder-width apart, knees soft. Take a step about 1.5 times your normal stride forward. Keep the upper body over torso; bend the back leg, bringing knee toward the ground. Look forward; keep chin up.

V-ups

Clients groan the loudest when Randle calls for V-ups (also called V-sit or vertical leg crunches).

“People don’t realize you can’t have strong abs without a strong back. This exercise works both. But it’s really tough,” Randle said.

V-ups involve lying flat on the floor with the lower back pressed to the ground and legs lifted toward the ceiling. Abdominal muscles are contracted to lift the head and shoulders slightly off the ground toward the ceiling. The arms reach for the toes. The body forms a V.

“Most beginners can do one or two. It requires great strength, balance and flexibility,” Randle said.

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Push-ups

This exercise is a gem because it hits several muscle groups at once: shoulder and chest, triceps, biceps, back and abs. Body weight is used as resistance, which requires a strong back and abs. Difficulty comes from maintaining balance and keeping the back straight, according to Figueroa and Randle.



There are various ways to do push-ups. The key is to complete the movement slowly, with abdominal muscles contracted to stabilize the neutral alignment of the body. Keep hands shoulder-width apart; shoulder blades should be slightly retracted or pinched together.

From a kneeling position, or facing the floor with straight legs, begin by pressing the body to a near straight-armed position (do not lock elbows), then slowly lower the body and graze the floor. It requires balance to keep the body straight.

Pull-ups/chin-ups

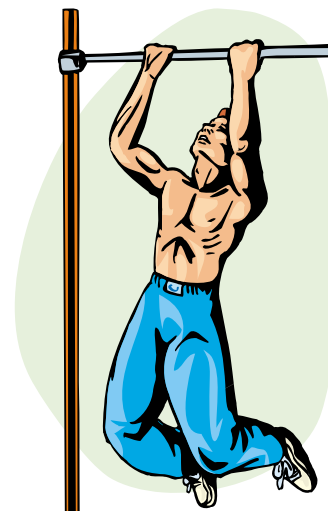
This exercise targets the front chest, back, shoulders and biceps. It requires an advanced level of strength, especially in the shoulder area.

“It is difficult for most people to push or pull their body weight,” Randle said.

Pull-ups can be done from a standing position or with a machine. When the grip is palms-up (supinated), it’s called a chin-up and targets the biceps. When the grip is palms-away (pronated), it hits the forearm and upper-back muscles.

The movement requires the exerciser to use body weight as resistance. Randle recommends beginners use a machine (such as a Gravitron) or help from a workout partner. Either way, you reduce the amount of body weight you are lifting and concentrate on good form. He said that by utilizing good form and correct amount of resistance, pull-ups can be a fun exercise.

“It gives the biceps a good pump,” he said.



Health Tips Questions 7

name _____

Use the space provided to write answers to each of the questions. Make certain your answers are in complete sentences.

1. Why do people hate squats and lunges?
2. What is considered to be the five toughest, yet most effective, exercises?
3. What are the rewards of doing squats?
4. What is the key to doing push-ups?
5. What are the rewards of doing lunges?
6. What is the difference between a supinated and pronated grip?

Health Tips Wordsearch 7

name _____

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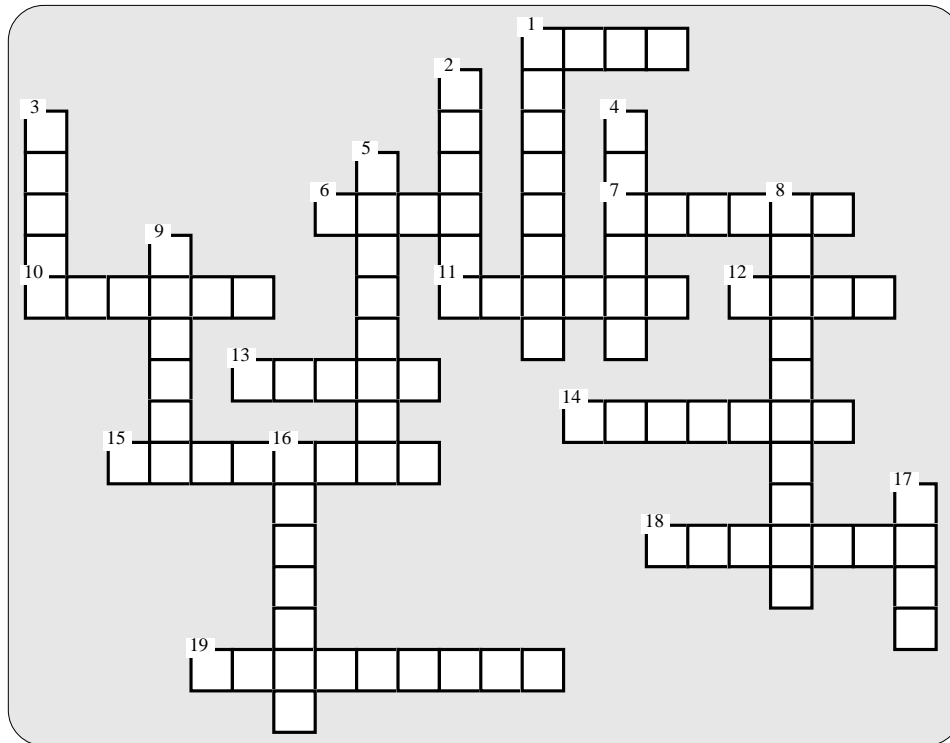
Use the clues below to discover words in the above puzzle. Circle the words.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Chicago | 11. groan |
| 2. Cunningham | 12. legs |
| 3. Figueroa | 13. novice |
| 4. Phelps | 14. once |
| 5. Randle | 15. pull |
| 6. Walker | 16. quads |
| 7. balance | 17. slowly |
| 8. beginners | 18. squats |
| 9. crunches | 19. supinate |
| 10. fast | 20. walking |

Health Tips Crossword 7

name _____

Use the clues provided to complete the crossword puzzle below.



Across:

1. It's easy to love exercise that gives _____ results
6. It is difficult for most people to push or _____ their body weight
7. A beginning exerciser
10. Requires proper form
11. The key to doing a push-up is to complete the movement _____
12. Push-ups hit several muscle groups at _____
13. Clients _____ the loudest when Randle calls for V-ups
14. Lunges can be performed in both stationary or _____ positions
15. Vertical leg _____
18. The difficulty with lunges is maintaining this
19. They have a tough time with squats

Down:

1. Director of Gorilla Sports Chicago
2. Still hates squats
3. Top of the thighs
4. One personal trainer
5. When the grip is palms-up on pull-ups
8. President of Performenhance
9. A trainer with Phenomenal Fitness
16. Gorilla Sports is located here
17. Lunges benefit these