

## The Low Down On Squat Depth

Enter into a conversation about the squat exercise and the subject of how deep a proper squat should be performed is bound to arise. This article will address issues of squat depth and performance.

The first concern from the less informed is that the deep squat will be dangerous to the knees, these concerns are usually unfounded, personally in my forty plus years of experience in weightlifting and powerlifting I have never witnessed or heard of a knee injury in a healthy individual which occurred at the bottom of a properly taught, coached, and performed deep squat. Injuries to the back, however, are more common with the lumbar spine being the most vulnerable area therefore squatting to a depth that causes lumbar flexion, especially under load, should be avoided if possible.

Here are some key realizations that must be made to maximize benefit and minimize injury.

- > Apart from the Olympic lifts the squat is the most complex lift most people will attempt to learn, treat squats as skilled movements that will be learned over time and constantly improved upon.

- > Learning to squat by watching others in the gym, “instructional” videos, or reading magazines is a huge compromise, you need the immediate feedback of a experienced professional while you learn to perform and improve upon this exercise.

- > Safe squat depth varies from person to person, the flexibility of you entire body affects how deep you can safely squat. Learn where your tight areas are and give them proper attention, here again, expert feedback is vital.

- > Stay balanced front to back, when performing barbell squats the path of the barbell should be vertical allowing forward travel of the barbell will shift the weight forward stressing the lower back and the knees.

- > Stay balanced from side to side, shifting towards one side while squatting is common and can lead to unbalanced development or injury and may be an indication of flexibility and/or strength imbalances.

- > Remember the hips, the hips should be the first joint to move when you squat keep your gluteus muscles tight throughout your squat this excellent involvement for the gluteus muscles keeps the low back and hamstring muscles from being overworked.

After reading this information some may ask if learning the squat is worth the trouble. To this I can answer that Olympic training centers, NCAA division 1 sports programs, and top training centers for professional athletes all use some form of free weight squat training with healthy athletes so the answer is a resounding YES!

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