

Exercise Prescription: Toe Touch Progression

Purpose of Exercise:

The toe touch progression is a simple exercise to improve body awareness (or sensory awareness) for deep squatting and hip hinging. The toe touch progression is a fundamental component of the exercises needed for the deep squat. It simply teaches the relaxation of the tension in the lower back and how to shift weight from the heels to the toes in a smooth and consistent fashion.

Self-Check

Active Straight Leg Raise

Starting Position:

PHASE 1- Stand erect with the feet side by side, heels and toes touching. The **balls of both feet** should be elevated onto a 1 to 2 inch platform such as a board or free weight plate.

PHASE 2- Similar to phase 1, except the **heels** are elevated on a 1 to 2 inch platform.

Insert a towel roll or foam roll between the knees by flexing the knees slightly and separating them without changing foot position. The towel or foam roll should be thick enough that the knees cannot be locked backward or hyperextended. This position will feel bowlegged and extremely awkward, but do not change it. If foot position is altered in any way, the towel roll is too large; unroll a layer or two before continuing.

The back should be relaxed and without tension. You should feel tension from the outside of the knee up through the outside of the hips.

Exercise Description:

PHASE 1- Reach for the ceiling, stretching the arms as high as possible with palms facing forward.

Remember to breathe normally.

Bend forward so that the fingertips touch the toes. If the fingertips do not make it completely to the toes, **squeeze** the towel roll to help relax certain muscles in the outer thigh and back so that the toes can be reached. If you still cannot reach the toes, **bend the knees** slightly to reach them. If a slight knee bend was required for the first repetition, try to bend the knees a little less this time. Reduce the knee bend with each repetition and try to go a little farther each time. You will feel tension in the calf behind the knee, in the hamstrings and possibly in the lower back.

Return to the starting position, keeping the heels on the ground and the hands raised as high as possible overhead with palms facing forward. Keep the abdominal region pulled inward and repeat the movement.

PHASE 2- With heels raised, repeat the toe touch movement, reaching up to the ceiling, bracing the abdominals and reaching to the toes. There may be slightly greater tension in the lower back and hamstrings and slightly less tension in the calves than in phase one. Bend the knees as little as possible to allow a toe touch and bend the knees less and less with each repetition until they can be held in a nearly straight position.

At no time during the exercise should the knee hyperextend or the foot position change. You should be closer to touching your toes or doing so more comfortably following this drill.

Pictures: (see next page)



Phase 1



Phase 2