

LYING LEG CURL

Build hamstrings and develop knee stability for running and jumping



finish

TARGET Hamstrings (and calves, to a lesser extent)

SET-UP Lie facedown on a leg-curl bench, positioning your knees just beyond the far edge of the bench. Adjust the rollers so that they rest against the backs of your ankles. Grasp the handles (or sides of the bench) to secure your torso. Keep your torso flat against the bench.

ACTION Inhale and hold your breath while bending your knees and pulling your feet toward your glutes, exhaling toward the top of the movement. In the peak contraction, your shins should be vertical; hold this position for one or two seconds and slowly return to the starting position. Resist the weight on the way down.

—Tim Rigby, M.A.



start

MAXFIT TIP

The angled bench (as shown) is preferable to a flat bench because it provides a more favorable position for your hips—you don't have to hyperextend your hips as you may be inclined to do on a flat-bench setup.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Snap! Crackle! Pop!

NO, IT'S NOT the chorus coming from your breakfast cereal, but it may be the sounds emanating from your knee joints when you run, lift or climb stairs. Here are three tips for dealing with sore joints if you have them and ways to avoid injuring your joints any further.

SNAP! Each time you step, your knee rolls inward. Your glutes work as a brake to decelerate that internal rotation, so you protect your knees by activating those muscles. Create maximum shock absorption by training your glutes on the transverse (rotational) plane, as well as the sagittal (forward/backward) plane. Two exercises that enable you to do this (and you're already doing them anyway) are squats and lunges.

CRACKLE! "If your knees hurt when you bend down, you could be loading wrong," says Fabio Comana, an ACE-certified exercise physiologist. "If you drive your knees forward, it stresses your caps." You can lessen the load by thrusting your hips backward before you bend, as in a squat.

POP! When you stand, your ankle joints should be in neutral alignment so that your weight is balanced. Become aware of whether you tend to roll in (pronate) or out (supronate) and correct your foot position by compensating in the opposite direction when training your legs.

—Chris Cander

MUST-HAVE: GoFit Stretch Rope

Lengthen your stiff muscles and improve your flexibility with GoFit's Stretch Rope, which comes complete with an exercise book that details stretches for your entire body.

PRICE: \$17.99, available at Walgreens and sporting goods stores

16 million

Number of Americans who were treated for knee pain in 2005

Source: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons