The Glutorial

Reversing the damage of gluteal amnesia
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WHAT IS GLUTEAL AMNESIA?
Gluteal amnesia is when your body forgets how to activate the gluteal muscles properly. The average adult is sedentary for 64% of the time they are awake due to the overwhelming majority of adults working a desk job that requires almost no physical activity. Because of our sedentary lifestyle, our muscles are not working as much as they should be, in particular our gluteal muscles. This is detrimental to the whole body because the glutes are the strongest and largest muscle in the body.

WHY DOES GLUTEAL AMNESIA OCCUR?
Excessive sitting lengthens the gluteal muscles and tightens the hip flexors which leads to decreased stabilizing function and overall gluteal weakness. Beyond excessive sitting, gluteal amnesia can also occur because of the overworking of your quadriceps, a previous injury, poor core strength, improper body mechanics and poor posture such as an anterior pelvic tilt.

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REACTIVATE YOUR GLUTES?
Since your glutes are the largest muscle in the body they are important for almost every movement. They keep your pelvis stable, propel us forward and keeps your whole lower body aligned, therefore weak glutes completely throw off our entire kinetic chain of movement. Weak glutes contribute to back pain, knee pain, strains, Achilles tendonitis and a number of other problems. Reactivating and strengthening your glutes can help prevent these injuries as well as boost athletic performance since they are essential for nearly every sport. Because the glutes control deceleration, acceleration, explosive movements and change in direction, strengthening them will improve athleticism.
How do I know if I have gluteal amnesia?

**INDICATOR #1**

One of the most obvious signs of gluteal amnesia is tight hamstrings after a workout that was supposed to use your glutes, especially if you have normal flexibility in your hamstrings. Because your glutes are weak your hamstrings, back and other muscles have to pick up the slack.

**INDICATOR #2**

Performing an overhead squat in the mirror is another great way to test for weak glutes. The knees should stay in line with the toes and not extend over them. If you notice your knees caving inwards, your knees traveling over your toes or a curve in your back, glute activation may be a problem. *(See Figure 1&2)*

**INDICATOR #3**

An anterior pelvic tilt can also lead to gluteal amnesia. Your glutes play a large role in posture because they control the whole lower half of your body. If you have a curve in your lower back with your belly protruding forward, this posture is called anterior pelvic tilt. Because of the tilted forward position your glutes are always in a relaxed state therefore weakening them. Reactivating your glutes will help pull your pelvis back into a neural position and allow your spine to rest in a more neutral position, decreasing stress to your lower back. *(See Figure 3)*
5 exercises to retrain your glutes

1. PRONE GLUTEAL RETRAINING

Step 1: Lay on your stomach with involved leg propped on toes.

Step 2: Straighten knee keeping toes on floor.

Step 3: Squeeze your glutes! Keep glutes tight, straighten knee and point toe.

Step 4: Repeat steps on opposite leg.

Do 2 sets of 5 reps per side, 20 total.

**TIPS**

- Make sure not to lift your leg, just straighten knees and point toes.
- Keep the exercise slow and controlled. Lifting the leg too high or too fast will activate the lower back muscles.
- Make sure the knee remains locked when the leg is lifted. If the knee bends, the hamstrings will be helping too much.
- If you are unable to contract your gluteal muscles well, place a pillow under your pelvis/abdomen or engage your lower abdominal muscles before performing.
2. BRIDGING

Step 1: Start with knees bent and feet on the floor.

Step 2: Next push your hands into the floor, raise toes off floor and raise buttocks off the ground pushing through your heels while keeping pelvis neutral. Hold for 2-3 seconds, and lower.

Progression 1: After completing the hold, repeat this exercise by raising/lowering slow and controlled.

Progression 2: Progress exercise to single leg bridge. Hug opposite knee to chest and raise into bridge on one leg.

Do 2 sets of 8-10 reps.

TIPS

• Do not round back, keep a neutral spine and drive buttocks up.

• Maintain gluteal and abdominal contraction through entire exercise.

• Play with foot position to find where you feel it in your glutes the most. For example if your heels are too close to your buttocks you may feel the exercise more in your quads and back.

• Avoid going on your toes. Drive with your heels.
3. 3D SQUATS

Step 1: Squats in varied foot positions. Shoulder width apart, left and right foot forward, wide, narrow, and toes out.

Step 2: Sit into hips, butt back, keep chest high, abdominals tight.

Do 2 sets of 3-5 reps in each position.

TIPS

• Do not round your back, keep a neutral spine.
• As you lower breathe in, as you stand breathe out.
• Do not let the knees extend over the toes.
4. GLUTE MAX SIT BACK

Step 1: Hook hands in a sink or hold onto a countertop.

Step 2: Prop one foot back on ball of the foot.

Step 3: Slowly sit back, keeping your pelvis level and most of the weight on your front leg.

Do 2 sets of 10-15 reps.

Single leg version (more difficult):

Step 1: Hook hands in a sink or hold onto a countertop.

Step 2: Instead of propping one foot on the ball of the foot, keep the foot off the ground.

Step 3: Slowly sit back, keeping your pelvis level and most of the weight on your front leg.

Do 2 sets of 10-15 reps.

**TIPS**

- Concentrate the weight into the heel of the front leg.
- Avoid pushing the front knee forward over the toes.
- Do not arch the low back.
- Lead with buttocks back.
5. GLUTEAL FOAM ROLLING

Step 1: Sit on top of a foam roller on the floor with one leg extended in front of you, and the other leg bent on top of the extended leg.

Step 2: Place the hand on the same side as your bent leg on the ground behind you and the other hand on your side.

Step 3: Move your body back and forth on the foam roller.

Step 4: When you find a tight or sore spot (trigger point), stop and hold on that area for 30 seconds.

Step 5: Continue to roll for 2-3 minutes then switch sides.

TIPS

• Remember, foam rolling may hurt at times especially when rolling out trigger points, this is a good thing. You are loosening up those tight muscles.

• After a long foam rolling session you may feel sore the next day. Make sure to drink plenty of water to help fuel your muscles.
How can you overcome gluteal amnesia and other injuries?

Everyone’s body is different and requires unique needs. By visiting a Physical Therapist, an individualized program can be created to get your body working in optimal performance. Viverant offers many services to reverse the damage of gluteal amnesia and other injuries to get you healthy again.

**PILATES**

Pilates focuses on controlled movements that build strength, balance, and coordination, mainly through an emphasis on a strong core and proper alignment. Although this can do wonders for your abdominal muscle, the effects can be felt throughout the body.

Unless a Pilates class or session is led by an experienced Physical Therapist, it’s likely that students and clients will get a one-size-fits-all approach to the movements. Pilates teachers are trained in movement, not physical evaluation. But Physical Therapists have extensive experience with understanding the body and how it operates. Viverant’s Physical Therapist can customize a program to fit your needs.

**DRY NEEDLING**

To completely resolve muscle imbalances caused by gluteal amnesia, releasing all involved trigger points is crucial. Identifying and releasing the trigger points can be done either manually or with dry needling by a trained Physical Therapist.

Dry needling involves the insertion of a thin needle into trigger point or “knots”. A trigger point is a group of tight shortened bands of muscle tissue which often cause pain in various parts of the body. Releasing these trigger points will restore the muscle to normal function.

**FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT SCREENING**

Come into Viverant for a total body functional movement screening to identify muscle imbalances and deficits caused by gluteal amnesia and other issues that often lead to injury and pain. Once imbalances are identified our Physical Therapist can target those areas to get you back in optimal condition.

To learn more about how Viverant can help and find the closest location near you, visit [viverant.com](http://viverant.com) or call 952.835.4512.
ABOUT VIVERANT

Viverant is a living, breathing community of expert physical therapists and top health professionals, all dedicated to helping you realize true recovery and your full physical potential. Stay in touch with us to keep up with what's new and what's next.