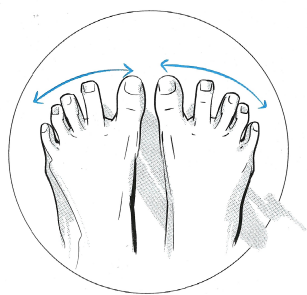
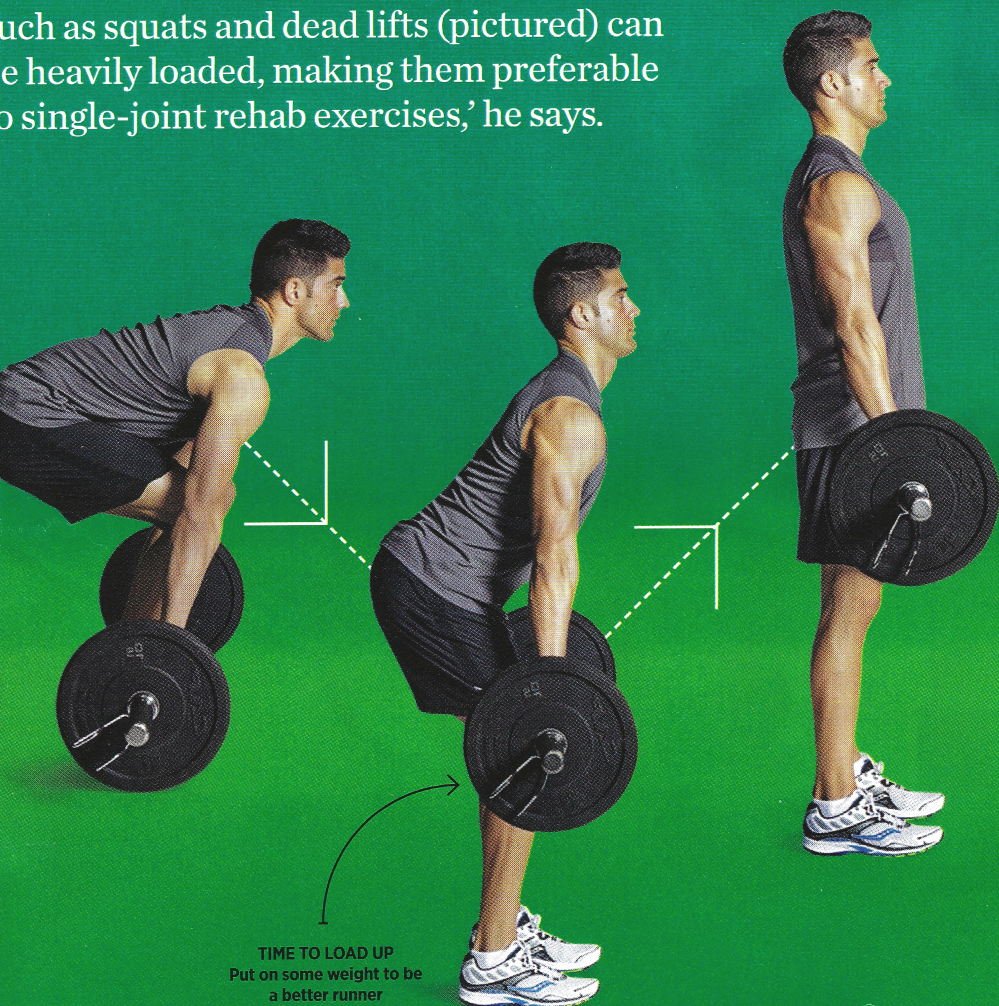


HEAVY DUTY

Step aside, clamshells. New research¹ suggests heavy-load resistance exercises may be more effective at strengthening the glutes than body-weight exercises such as clamshells, bridges and leg lifts. Study author Petr Stastny says it's about matching the forces athletes encounter in their sport. 'Exercises such as squats and dead lifts (pictured) can be heavily loaded, making them preferable to single-joint rehab exercises,' he says.



Putting on a good spread

Your toes, that is, not dinner

This month, podiatrist Nicola Blower (walkrite.co.uk) explains why mobile toes are a good thing.

WHY DO IT? To assess the strength of the muscles that stabilise the big toe, little toe and medial and lateral arches. 'Arch stability is just as important as core stability,' says Blower. 'If these muscles are weak, the foot can become unstable, putting pressure on tendons, ligaments and fascia structures.'

THE TEST With your foot on the floor, try to spread the big toe and little toe away from the other toes. If you can, try to move each of these toes individually.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR Can you spread the big and little toes out to the sides at all? If so, can you move them sideways without lifting or curling them at the same time? If you can't move them, or only if you move them up or down as well, the muscles are not functioning optimally.

HOW TO IMPROVE Sit with your feet out in front (legs supported) or flat on the floor and focus on moving the big toe and little toe of one foot outwards without lifting or curling them. Hold for 10 secs, then work the other foot. Practise for 3-5 mins a day. 'Each time you ask your brain to do this, the neural connection to the toes will improve,' says Blower. To progress, place an elastic band around your toes and spread them against it for more resistance.

Run maths How to chill out muscle soreness



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5 PER CENT
REDUCTION IN
EXERCISE-INDUCED
MUSCLE SORENESS²

Two-way tip Heal your hamstrings

EASE BACK INTO IT A recent study found that half of all re-injuries to hamstrings occurred within 25 days of returning to training, which suggests athletes were not giving themselves enough time to recover completely.

BE NEGATIVE Moves that lengthen the muscle under tension (negative exercises) are great for hamstring strength. Try modified Nordic Curls (kneel on the floor and lower your body to the floor while your lower legs are held in place).