

# SQUATS: the best exercise

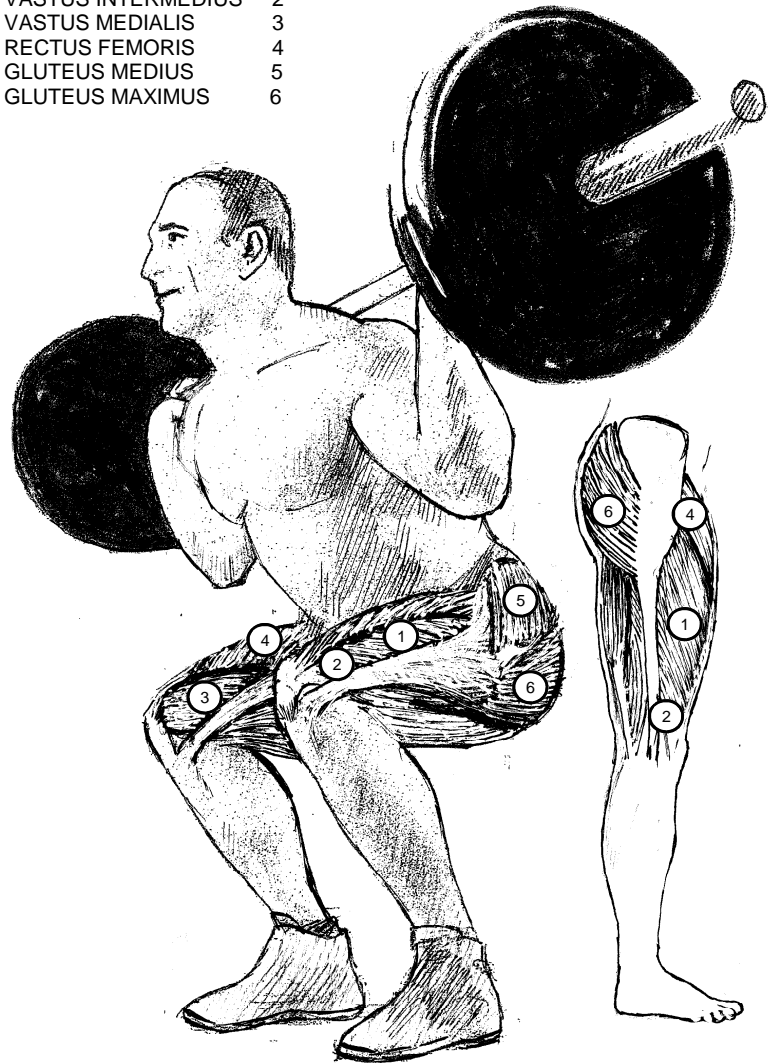
**Adam Traynor**

Squats develop overall body strength better than any other exercise, affecting the entire muscular system, improving respiratory capacity and cardiovascular integrity. The squat is the best exercise for promoting bone density, retarding the onslaught of osteoporosis.

The total beginner should practice squatting without weight until good form is achieved, and then squat deeply, with just the bar, until the move feels right. Follow the instructions below and if possible get advice from an experienced squatter.

Stand facing a squat rack; set the bar to shoulder height with your feet shoulder-width apart, the toes pointing straight ahead. Hold a barbell across the shoulders behind the neck and resting on the upper trapezius muscle. Your hands should grip the bar a little wider than shoulder-width apart. It's important that the body-weight is equally distributed on both feet. Flex your knees and slowly lower the body into the squat. Your knees should come forward slightly, the buttocks dropping slightly to the rear, your trunk inclining forward slightly. Your back should be kept slightly arched in its normal position. When the thighs are horizontal, straighten the legs and explode upwards. The barbell

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| VASTUS LATERALIS   | 1 |
| VASTUS INTERMEDIUS | 2 |
| VASTUS MEDIALIS    | 3 |
| RECTUS FEMORIS     | 4 |
| GLUTEUS MEDIUS     | 5 |
| GLUTEUS MAXIMUS    | 6 |



**MAJOR MUSCLES INVOLVED IN SQUATTING**

should travel in a straight, vertical line and your weight should remain centred over the middle of the feet and not on the heels or toes.

During the descent and ascent keep your head and chest up. The depth of the squat will vary depending upon each individual. In general, however, your thighs should be horizontal - in so doing you will go through a

full range of motion maximizing muscular involvement. However, if you have relatively weak knees, you should avoid the deep squat, especially if using heavy weights.

Many experienced squatters squat much deeper than horizontal, initially you don't need to; take your time and let experience be your guide.