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What are you trying to do for fitness?

Squat versus Leg Press

'What is the difference between the two?' is a common question.

Basically they both work the same muscle groups but the squat will have more of an emphasis on the gluteus maximus and the hamstring group. Also, you will strengthen more of the stabilizer muscles in the body. These muscles are used to help balance the weight while it is on the one's back. Another benefit of the squat is that you will strengthen your lower back. The leg press may or may not emphasize the gluteus maximus or the hamstring group. This is dependent on the position of the individual's feet on the machine. Also, there is much less to no stabilization involved in the leg press.

Both exercises are great for strengthening the lower body and improving the body's ability to increase lower body force delivery by focusing on the quadriceps, gluteus maximus and hamstrings.

When performing the squat there are a few things to remember:

- Feet are shoulder width apart and straight ahead
- Your knees always follow your feet
- Wear a weight belt if you feel you need it, troubles keeping rigid torso or if heavy weight
- Always keep your back straight (this is done by keeping your chest out
and your shoulder blades back)
- Squat no lower than the midline of your thigh parallel to the floor

Try practicing as if you are at a picnic carrying a plate of food out in front of you with your arms extended and sitting back onto a picnic table. First you would get into position and begin pushing your hips back to sit onto the seat while keeping the chest upright (otherwise you might spill your food). You don't want to miss the picnic table bench, so push your hips back fairly far and then begin bending the knees.

When performing the leg press keep your feet shoulder width on the platform. If the feet are placed high on the platform the gluteus maximus and hamstrings are emphasized more. The ideal location for the feet is mid-platform. When you push the weighted platform never lock your knees out. Always stop right before you lock out. This will keep you from hyper extending the knee.

Both exercises are great lower body exercises and can have a significant effect on lower body strength and power transfer. As with any exercise and training regiment, always remember to follow a proper warm-up, cool down, and stretching after being medically cleared to exercise and following proper supervision. For further information or personal instruction, please contact me at Michael@tri4fitness.net.