

Jonathan: Hey, it's Jonathan Bailor. Excited to invite you into my living room to chat about assisted eccentric squats. So the first thing to keep in mind is that these are going to be a "getting started" exercise with this and every other form of exercise. When it comes to smarter exercise, remember that the key is activating all of our muscle fibers and the way we do that is by exerting as much force as we can as safely and sustainably as we can.

The exercise I'm going to show you here, which is your at-home assisted eccentric squat, is going to be perfect for individuals who are just getting started, individuals who are carrying a lot of excess weight. But if you're already someone who's fairly fit, what I'm going to show you here might not be sufficient. You may need to apply these same principles using equipment at a gym, such as a leg press.

But let's just focus on the general approach because, as you know, eccentric exercise, or smarter exercise, isn't a whole new form of exercise. It's not a new exercise you need to learn; rather it's a way to perform any sort of exercise so that it maximizes the hormonal healing that takes place in your body and allows you to permanently change that system rather than starving that system.

Assisted eccentric squats — with any eccentric movement, what we want to do is focus on the lowering portion because that's where our muscles are the strongest. Why not take advantage of our muscle strength, right? It allows us to use the most force possible. For example, when you perform a squat, squat is just like you're sitting down on the pot. The reason I say "on the pot" is because most of us naturally stick our butt out and sit back when we're going to sit down on the pot and then we stand up. We don't do things like this where our knees come forward. You really don't want to do that any time you do a squat movement. You want to make sure that your kneecap stays behind or even with the front of your foot. So, again, nothing like this. We're going down and back. You really want to stick your butt back, your chest out, and go down.

Now, traditional squat — and any exercise has two movements — the down and the up, or the eccentric and the concentric. So this is the eccentric portion of a squat and this is the concentric, or the muscles contracting. Now, there's nothing wrong with concentric movements — we're going to do them — but we want to make sure that we're maximizing muscular force and because our muscles are stronger eccentrically than they are concentrically, we need to use more force eccentrically, or on the way down, than we do concentrically. And here's a creative way to do that while squatting.

First, you want to make sure you're safe. What I recommend is that you have something very sturdy to hold onto. This really isn't sturdy enough. Ideally, you would have something like a banister or a railing — something that is not going to move — and then grab something to put

behind you. So imagine, for example, an ottoman. The reason we have the ottoman is just in case we lose our balance. You don't want to fall down. Remember, priority one — priority one — is always safety. If you get hurt, that is the quickest way to sabotage any exercise routine so it's not smarter exercise if it's risky.

When we do a smarter and an eccentric squat at home, we're going to assist ourselves. Traditional squat — and this just might be how you get started if you're very new to this — grab something just to keep your balance and then you're going to squat through your heels. The force should really be going through your heels. You're sticking your butt back, chest out — kind of like you're in the military standing at attention — but really get that butt back. You're going to go ahead and squat down and back, down and back.

You kind of notice here, my knees aren't coming forward. I'm just going down and back and, in an ideal world, you'd squat to right around parallel so that your quad or your thigh here is parallel with the ground. Then you'd come back up. Now, that's just a regular squat. No change there. That's a squat. You're sitting down. You're standing back up. And you're not using your hands for support here; you're just using them for balance so you shouldn't be putting a bunch of attention on your arms. If your arms are flexing, you're using your hands too much.

So if you're just getting started, squat down really slow and then back up. And generally speaking, when you're breathing, I want you to do something that seems a little bit like the breathing when females are giving birth, or this Lamaze-type breathing. So you're going to do this burst-based belly breathing, which is like [heavy rapid bursts of breathing] — short, powerful breaths throughout the movement. That helps to dissipate the substance called cortisol in your muscles so you can go for longer — but that's a little too much.

Okay, squatting. How do we use more resistance on the way down than we are on the way up? Well, pretty easily. Right now when I'm doing a squat, I'm putting fifty percent of my body weight on one leg and fifty percent on the other leg, so lifting myself fifty-fifty. What I want you to do is just try to put more weight on one leg than the other while obviously keeping balance. So if you're just getting started, what you're going to do mentally is say, I'm going to just try to put more weight on my right leg. So it's almost like you're standing on one leg but you're not, you still have your leg here for comfort. What might be helpful is to actually take the leg that is not going to be the load-bearing leg and to put it maybe up front a little bit or just somewhere else where it's not going to be as easy for you to use that leg to push up with.

So that's what I'll do here. I'm going to do this with my left leg. So I'm going to put my right leg forward a little bit just to remind myself this is not the leg that should be doing work on the way down. I've got my left leg here planted and what I'm going to do is, very slowly, for 10 seconds, I'm going to lower myself down, trying to put as much of my body weight on my left leg as

possible. So I've got my hands for balance, I've still got my other leg for balance. I'm going nice and slow. When I get to the bottom, now if I try to lift myself with just one leg, it's not going to happen because, remember, you're stronger on the way down than you are on the way up. But you can certainly lift yourself with both legs so you bring your other leg back, stand up. So you do a regular squat up and then you assist yourself doing a one-leg eccentric squat down. So a really advanced person, for example, might actually just lift this leg up completely and do a one-legged squat. We're not there yet so you're going to just put that forward or keep it here. The point is, you're trying to put as much resistance on one leg as possible on the way down, very slow, for 10 seconds, and then you're going to lift yourself up with both legs.

Now, how much weight should you be putting on one leg? You should use the amount of weight that forces you to be done in 10 seconds. What I mean by that is this. If you can just hold this forever, if you're just sitting here, "Hey, this isn't too bad," that means you're not putting enough resistance on your one leg. Similarly, if you're like, "Wow, I'm really advanced. I'm going to lift this leg up" and go, Oh, and you fall, that means that's too much resistance. It's kind of like Little Red Riding Hood. Not too hot, not too cold — right in the middle.

So what you want to do is you're counting to 10, you're breathing [heavy rapid bursts], and if you start to go down too fast, meaning it's going to take you fewer than 10 seconds to get down, you need to use this leg more. If you're not going down slow enough — because really what you should try to do — just try to not go down. Just try to hold yourself up. But this leg should be not helping you so gravity should be forcing you down.

Literally, you're not thinking to yourself, "I'm going to lower myself down for 10 seconds." What you're thinking to yourself is, "All right, I'm going to try to hold this position. Oh, man. Yep, can't hold it, can't hold it. Oh, I need some more help because that's more than 10 seconds. Can't hold it. Whew!" 10 seconds to the bottom. Stand up.

What you're going to do is six repetitions. So one repetition is [counts to 10 while squatting], stand up. That's one repetition. So you're going to do six 10-second repetitions or six 10-second eccentric lowers and you're going to stand up however you want. And you're going to switch your legs and do that for the other leg. So that's 60 seconds' time under tension for both legs.

So again, remember, just summarizing. You're putting as much weight as you can on one leg such that if you try to stand up, gravity forces you down in 10 seconds. But make sure you're using as much resistance as you can safely handle because if you're just kind of going through the motions, remember, you're not going to activate those Type IIb muscle fibers. Stand up. Repeat that six times. Switch legs. Repeat that six times. And you're done with your assisted eccentric squats.

If you want to add even more resistance, again, you can lift your leg up or, if you can find additional forms of resistance — so this is a weight vest. You can actually wear this while you're doing your squats. Or what some people like to do is hold it in one hand while they squat down. You could do that similarly with a dumbbell. The reason I bring that up is because, again, remember, every single week, you should be looking to add resistance, add resistance, add resistance because your muscles get stronger just like your brain gets stronger. Once you learn your multiplication tables, just rehearsing them over and over again won't make you smarter. You have to move on to harder math problems. Same thing applies here. So every week, try to use a little bit more and more resistance, six 10-second eccentric repetitions per leg, and you're done.