



**Muscular Development** • By Emma Colson

# Train Lazy Butts!

**Are your buttocks on or off? For an all round increase in form, here a few exercises to turn on lazy butts.**

**N**ice butt, but could it be better? I thought this an apt beginning for an article on that part of the human anatomy that appears to have generation after generation fascinated. Butts are associated with sexy images, Adonis bodies, beautiful models and the constant talk of those magazines aimed at women younger than myself—make no butts about it.

However a good butt is a necessity for the cyclist and not just aesthetically but functionally! Just look at the butt on Baden Cook, you can spot him a mile off because of it. For the physiotherapist we can talk about the buttocks without fear of being sued or locked up because it is part of our job to assess, feel and look at butts, especially in cyclists. It is certainly not a case of if you've seen one you have seen them all as patients have very different types of buttock development.

**'Get more gluteals ... get more power.' 'Excessive work-load of the quadriceps is due to a consummate dis-use of the gluteals.'**

## Buttock Anatomy

The main muscle I am talking about is the gluteus maximus. It is the most superficial buttock muscle and the one concerned with extension (backwards motion) of the hip. Under the gluteus maximus muscle are a whole lot of smaller capsular muscles of the hip joint. Their actions are more concerned with rotation and stability of the hip joint and the sacroiliac joint.

## What Do Glutes Do?

The first thing I tell my patients is that if they get more gluteals they will get more power for each pedal stroke. This is not just to motivate them to do their exercises but it is true. Two things happen during the power phase of the pedal stroke. The knee goes into extension, powered by the quadriceps (we all know that), which is the reason why you get sore quads during cycling. The other motion that is occurring simultaneously is the hip extension. It is this active extension of the hip that is powered by the gluteal muscles.

## Minimised Maximus

Lazy Gluteals may just lie dormant in a cyclist without necessarily causing problems but here is a list of potential problems that can occur with high or increased training loads and poor gluteal function:

Patello-femoral joint pain (knee pain): this occurs due to excessive loading of the quadriceps (mainly the vastus lateralis). The vastus lateralis places tension on the patella laterally (to the outside of the body). The excessive workload of the quadriceps is due to a consummate disuse of

the gluteals.

Back pain: Under-utilisation of the gluteals during the power-stroke can cause the cyclist to 'throw' their pelvis into the pedal stroke rather than holding their pelvis still and activating the gluteal muscle on the hip joint with a stable pelvis.

Lactic feeling in the outside or lateral thigh muscles without any lactic feeling in the gluteals. After intense cycling a lactic feeling is normal, however that feeling should be distributed amongst all your power muscles rather than exhausting one supply without tapping into the other.

## Lazy Butt Causes

Pain or injury history, such as: low back pain, pelvic pain, sacroiliac pain, buttock impact or contusions.

Internal hip pathology, such as: labral tears (cartilage), dysplasia (shape incongruency), synovitis (inflammation) and degeneration (arthritis).

The gluteus maximus just gets lazy through lack of use (sitting on your butt all day). The one bit of exercise we do for the day doesn't guarantee it will spring in to action straight away. Sometimes people learn to ride a bike with their quads and never develop a feel of gaining any drive from the hip muscles.

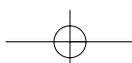
Saddle position: If the saddle is too far forward such that the cyclist is sitting almost upright in the pelvis, the gluteals have very little range to work through. Alternatively if the saddle is way back from the pedal axis, the gluteals will be over-lengthened and unable to work effectively. This is especially the case if the rider has a lack of hip flexion range of motion and is placed in an extreme 'setback' position. ●

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## BUTT EXERCISES

### A. Isolation/Activation Exercises

**Y**ou will notice many of these exercises are at a very low level. These are designed for people who have poor gluteal function. If resistance is added before the patient obtains good function, the patient will tend to recruit other muscles instead of the gluteus maximus (such as the hamstring or deeper gluteal muscles). Isolated contractions are held for about 3 to 5 seconds and done 'fairly often'. For anyone worried about becoming like J-Lo, these exercises will actually firm you up back there, so get your backside in gear and put your butt into it.



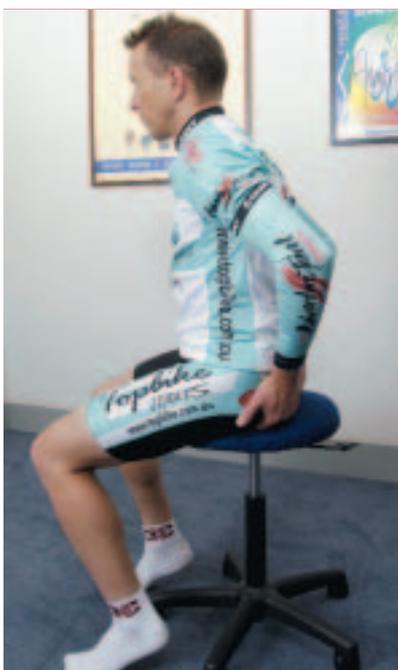


# BUTT EXERCISES



## ACTIVATION OF GLUTEALS IN FIGURE 4 POSITION

With the leg raised up in the position shown (called the figure 4 because the body looks like a 4 when viewed from above), contract the gluteals without contraction of the hamstring or other muscles. This gluteal squeezing also allows the patient to stretch the anterior hip region.



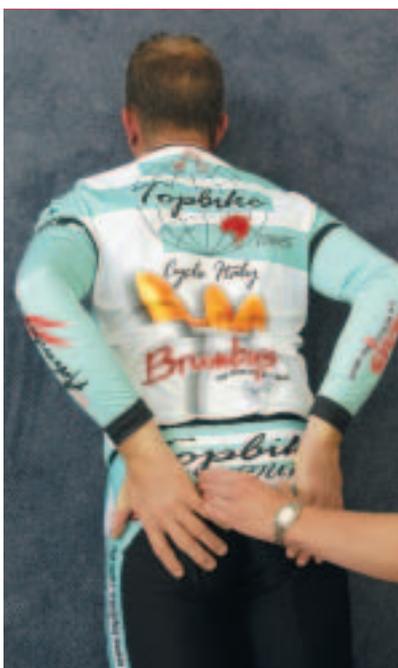
## ACTIVATION OF BUTTOCKS IN SITTING

This is good for the office worker. Sit on your hands and feel the contraction of the buttock muscles. Get the contraction on both sides and then one side and then the other. Do the contraction without any other muscle activity.



## ACTIVATION OF BUTTOCKS IN HIP FLEXED POSITION

This position simulates the 'top-stroke' where the gluteals are commencing the power phase of the pedal stroke. In the position above, imagine driving the foot into the bench surface using the buttock muscles to squeeze (to push the thighbone).

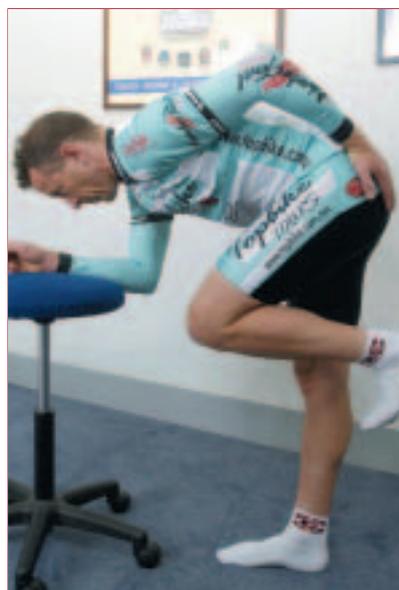


## ACTIVATION OF GLUTEALS IN LYING

Lying on your stomach, put your hands on both butt cheeks and squeeze them together. See if you can contract only the buttock muscles without the hamstrings or 'back passage' muscles. Then contract one side separately from the other. It is better if you can do this isolation exercise prior to any progression.

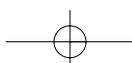
## B. Through Range Exercises

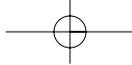
Once the gluteals can be activated in the above positions you may progress to strengthening work, called Through Range.



## CYCLING HIP EXTENSION

Adopt a cycling 'time-trial' posture leaning forward on a bench. Take the hip to the top-stroke position and activate the gluteals at the start of the motion. From this position take the hip backwards in a cycling motion. Maintain gluteal activation (firm butt) for all of the backward motion, but let it go on return to the top-stroke position. This can be done continuously for a few minutes at a time. Resistance can be added once the patient has the correct motion.



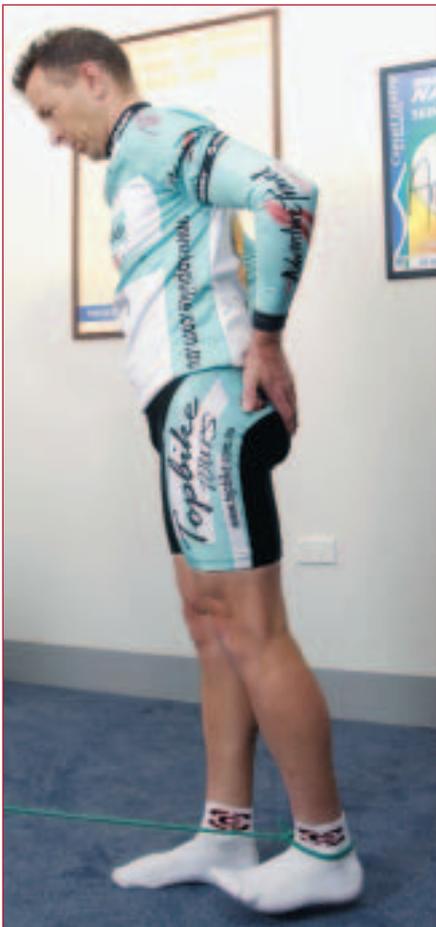


# BUTT EXERCISES



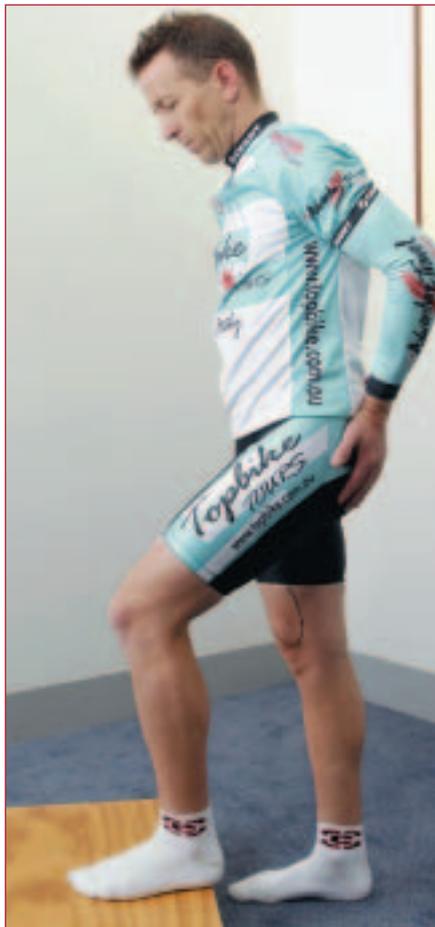
## HIP EXTENSION STRENGTHENING

For pure strength 'inner range' work to the gluteus maximus, lying on your tummy, feel the contraction of the buttock muscle and then lift the leg off the couch with the knee bent beyond 90 degrees. Do not lift the hip very far. Do not rotate the pelvis or arch the lumbar spine. Weights can be added to the ankle to get more advanced strengthening. I usually advise patients to stick to a weight that fatigues them in around 6 to 8 repetitions and do three sets.



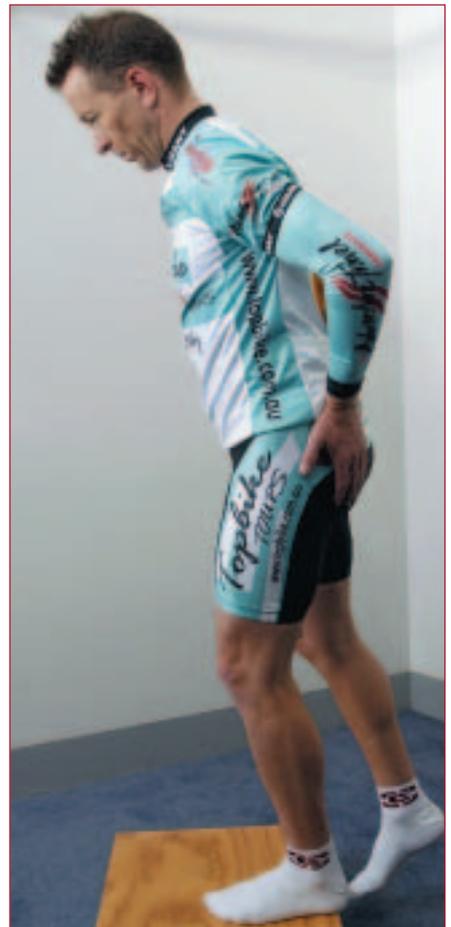
## THERABAND HIP EXTENSION

Using the resistance of the theraband, contract the buttock muscle and move the hip from slightly in-front of the body to just behind the midline of the body, working the gluteal muscles all the way. Keep the pelvis still. This can be done as a repetitious exercise for 30 seconds to a minute. Usually do three sets with a short break between.



## STEP UP GLUTEAL ACTIVATION, START POSITION

The patient places the foot on a step. Before the patient steps up the gluteals are 'activated' or squeezed on. See next picture



## STEP UP CONTINUED

Maintain the buttocks tight throughout the whole ascent of the step. This way you are teaching your buttocks to push the hip during weight-bearing activities (such as powering the pedals).

