

THE **FINE LINE** —

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Why You Need to Be Doing Deadlifts



We recognize our devotion to strength training, given how instrumental it is for health and longevity, but confess not all movements are equal. There's one that feels inimitable. All hail the deadlift.

It's a full-body exercise and your purest measure of strength. And contrary to myth, it decreases back pain while improving functional strength, increases core strength and stability, and prevents muscle



It may feel intimidating initially, but once you master the form you will feel nothing less than invincible.

THINK OF IT AS THE HEALTH LIFT

Years ago, **Crossfit** founder Greg Glassman boldly pronounced the merits of a 75-year-old doing deadlifts. “To say no [to deadlifts] is to say that if you drop your pen on the ground, you’re not gonna pick it up. It’s a deadlift. It’s picking something off the ground.”

Though its name originates from the dead (stationary) weights lifted directly off the ground, Glassman has noted the moniker might be what scares away the masses. He prefers to think of this perfect movement as “the health lift.”

Trainers concur that Glassman is onto something. Crossfit Atlanta head coach Damon Mosley, who has trained women over 50 for nearly 20 years, believes “... the old saying, ‘move it or lose it’ is gospel, but the gradual decrease in our abilities can absolutely be delayed, if not prevented completely. Aging may change our ability to move, but our need to function will always be present. Along with core strength and posture, deadlifts improve balance and stability. They can prevent falling as you age.” He notes that with functionality, you retain confidence and independence.

Aside from ensuring functional strength as we age, deadlifts are the most efficient exercise. No other movement can simultaneously **define your butt** (prepare to say goodbye to your Spanx!), hamstrings, and lower-back muscles, while tightening your core, burning fat and — an added benefit for women — strengthening the pelvic floor.

Squat devotees take heed: Deadlifts burn more calories and create leaner muscle long term. They will also make you stand taller and therefore look slimmer instantly, thanks to the amount of back activation required. Contrarily, over time squats may reinforce or aggravate mobility issues — arthritic knees and weak ankles for starters.

NOVICES WELCOME

Deadlifts do not require years of practice, high repetitions, or even fast movements to make an impact. And they can be executed with the weight of your choosing: barbells, dumbbells, or



Joslyn Thompson Rule, Nike master trainer and strength coach for *Women's Health* magazine, offers the following guidelines:

- Stand with your feet about hip width apart, the barbell on the floor in front of you.
- Bend at the knees and hips, sliding your hands down your thighs and take hold of the bar with an overhand grip.
- Take a deep breath and tense your abdominal muscles.
- Keeping your head up and back straight, tighten your shoulder blades (imagine trying to snap the bar).
- Straighten your legs slightly and lift the bar a little so that the bar touches the weight plates.
- Send your hips back and lift, keeping the bar close to your legs.
- Engage your glutes at the top of the move but don't thrust so far that your back overextends.
- Lower to the original position.

By setting the weight down in the original position, you are releasing all tension in your body. This rest also resets your spine to neutral, which will set you up for the next rep.

THE ULTIMATE PICK-ME-UP

Beyond a stronger physique and enhanced metabolism, deadlifts bring an incomparable feeling of empowerment and strength — something women seek at every age.

PHOTO: RYAN L. JANE

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