

Video: Get Fit to Ride

Here are five exercises you can do at home to help improve your riding.

May 2009 Exclusive

Riding horses is great exercise, but working on your fitness and core strength when you're not in the saddle will make you a more effective equestrian. Here are some exercises for riders recommended by fitness expert Rallie McAllister, MD. View the video [here](#) or download it to your portable video player and take your workout with you!

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- 1. Seated Ball Squeeze:** This is a great exercise to work the muscles of the inner thighs (called adductors), which are critical to riding. Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor and shoulder-width apart. Place a 10-inch diameter rubber ball (a kickball or soccer ball will work just fine) between your thighs, just above your knees. Squeeze the ball firmly between your thighs, holding the muscle contraction for 5 to 10 seconds. Allow your muscles to relax for 5 to 10 seconds. Do eight to 12 repetitions.
- 2. Bridge with Ball Squeeze:** Strengthens the muscles of the inner thighs, gluteus and core. Lie on your back on the floor with your knees bent. Hold the ball between your thighs just above your knees. Lift your buttocks off the floor toward the ceiling, contracting your gluteal muscles and squeezing the ball between your thighs. Hold the position for 8 to 15 seconds, relax, and repeat the exercise for a set of eight to 12 repetitions.
- 3. Forward Lunge:** Strengthens the quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus and the core, including the abdominal muscles and the spinal erector muscles of the back--all important for the rider's seat. Stand upright with your feet together, with or without light dumbbells in both hands. Keeping your head up and your back straight, take a big step forward with your right leg and bend your knee, allowing your left knee to hover above the floor. The right leg should be far enough forward so the left leg is almost straight. Push yourself back up to the starting position with a strong, smooth movement, bringing your feet together. Step forward with the left leg and repeat the exercise to complete one repetition. Do eight to 12 repetitions for one set.
- 4. Skater Style Lateral Lunge:** Strengthens the muscles of the inner thighs, as well as the quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus and core. Stand with your feet together, and take a large step to the right, bending the right knee and touching your right foot with your left hand. In this position, you should resemble a speed skater, bent at the waist so your chest touches the thigh of your right leg. Keep your back flat, your head up, and your right knee directly over your right foot with your toes pointed forward. Now, push off of the right foot and return to the starting position. Repeat the exercise on the opposite side and alternate legs for a set of eight to 12 repetitions.
- 5. Front Squat:** Strengthens the muscles of the inner thighs as well as the quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus and core. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Keeping your back straight and your head up, bend your knees and lower yourself until your thighs are slightly lower than parallel to the floor. Push up from your heels and return to the starting position without locking your knees. Perform this exercise in a slow and controlled manner, making sure your back remains straight and your knees are over your feet. Repeat for a set of eight to 12 repetitions.

Read on for more exercises you can do at home.

Learn some exercises to practice in the saddle.

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