

BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES ATHLEAN X

BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES ATHLEAN X: MAXIMIZING POSTERIOR CHAIN STRENGTH WITHOUT EQUIPMENT

BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES ATHLEAN X OFFERS A POWERFUL AND ACCESSIBLE APPROACH TO BUILDING A STRONG AND FUNCTIONAL POSTERIOR CHAIN. MANY FITNESS ENTHUSIASTS ASSOCIATE INTENSE HAMSTRING DEVELOPMENT WITH HEAVY WEIGHTS AND SPECIALIZED GYM EQUIPMENT, BUT JEFF CAVALIERE'S PHILOSOPHY, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN ATHLEAN-X PROGRAMS, DEMONSTRATES THAT REMARKABLE RESULTS CAN BE ACHIEVED USING ONLY YOUR OWN BODY WEIGHT. THIS ARTICLE DELVES INTO THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND EFFECTIVE BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING TRAINING, EXPLORING KEY EXERCISES, PROPER FORM, PROGRESSION STRATEGIES, AND HOW TO INTEGRATE THEM INTO A COMPREHENSIVE FITNESS REGIMEN. WE WILL DISSECT THE MECHANICS OF HAMSTRING ENGAGEMENT AND PROVIDE ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO ENHANCE THEIR LEG STRENGTH, POWER, AND INJURY RESILIENCE THROUGH TARGETED BODYWEIGHT MOVEMENTS. PREPARE TO UNLOCK YOUR HAMSTRING'S POTENTIAL, NO GYM REQUIRED.

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UNDERSTANDING HAMSTRING ANATOMY AND FUNCTION

THE HAMSTRINGS ARE A GROUP OF THREE MUSCLES LOCATED AT THE BACK OF THE THIGH: THE BICEPS FEMORIS (LONG AND SHORT HEADS), THE SEMITENDINOSUS, AND THE SEMIMEMBRANOSUS. THESE MUSCLES PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN KNEE FLEXION (BENDING THE KNEE) AND HIP EXTENSION (STRAIGHTENING THE HIP). A WELL-DEVELOPED HAMSTRING COMPLEX IS VITAL NOT ONLY FOR ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE, CONTRIBUTING TO SPRINTING SPEED, JUMPING POWER, AND OVERALL LOWER BODY STRENGTH, BUT ALSO FOR MAINTAINING GOOD POSTURE AND PREVENTING LOWER BACK INJURIES. WEAK HAMSTRINGS CAN LEAD TO AN IMBALANCE WITH THE QUADRICEPS, INCREASING THE RISK OF STRAINS AND OTHER INJURIES.

THEIR DUAL ACTION—FLEXING THE KNEE AND EXTENDING THE HIP—MEANS THAT EFFECTIVE TRAINING NEEDS TO TARGET BOTH FUNCTIONS. MANY COMMON LEG EXERCISES, LIKE SQUATS AND LUNGES, HEAVILY ENGAGE THE HAMSTRINGS DUE TO THEIR ROLE IN HIP EXTENSION. HOWEVER, TO FULLY DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN THE HAMSTRINGS, SPECIFIC EXERCISES THAT ISOLATE THEIR ACTIONS OR PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT ECCENTRIC AND CONCENTRIC LOADING ARE NECESSARY. THIS IS WHERE A TARGETED APPROACH, EVEN WITH BODYWEIGHT, BECOMES PARAMOUNT.

THE ATHLEAN-X PHILOSOPHY ON BODYWEIGHT TRAINING

JEFF CAVALIERE'S ATHLEAN-X METHODOLOGY EMPHASIZES FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH, ATHLETICISM, AND INJURY PREVENTION. THE CORE PRINCIPLE IS TO TRAIN THE BODY IN A WAY THAT MIMICS NATURAL MOVEMENT PATTERNS AND BUILDS A RESILIENT PHYSIQUE. WHEN IT COMES TO BODYWEIGHT TRAINING, ATHLEAN-X FOCUSES ON MAXIMIZING MUSCLE ACTIVATION AND INTENSITY THROUGH STRATEGIC EXERCISE SELECTION, TEMPO MANIPULATION, AND ADVANCED TRAINING TECHNIQUES. THE BELIEF IS THAT WITH INTELLIGENT PROGRAMMING AND PROPER EXECUTION, THE BODY'S OWN RESISTANCE IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO STIMULATE SIGNIFICANT MUSCLE GROWTH AND STRENGTH GAINS.

THIS APPROACH DISMISSES THE NOTION THAT HEAVY EXTERNAL WEIGHTS ARE THE ONLY PATH TO HYPERTROPHY AND STRENGTH. INSTEAD, IT CHAMPIONS THE IDEA OF CREATING CHALLENGES THROUGH LEVERAGE, INSTABILITY, AND INCREASED TIME UNDER TENSION. FOR HAMSTRINGS, THIS TRANSLATES TO EXERCISES THAT FORCE THE MUSCLES TO WORK HARDER THROUGH A GREATER RANGE OF MOTION OR UNDER MORE DEMANDING CONTROL, OFTEN BY ALTERING BODY POSITIONING OR TEMPO. THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO PERFORM THE MOVEMENT, BUT TO PERFORM IT WITH MAXIMUM INTENT AND EFFICIENCY, ENSURING EVERY REPETITION CONTRIBUTES TO PROGRESS.

ESSENTIAL BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES

ATHLEAN-X ADVOCATES FOR A VARIETY OF BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES THAT EFFECTIVELY TARGET THE HAMSTRINGS BY MIMICKING THEIR PRIMARY FUNCTIONS. THESE EXERCISES OFTEN INVOLVE VARIATIONS THAT INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY AND ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT ADDING EXTERNAL WEIGHT. THE FOCUS IS ON EXERCISES THAT PROMOTE BOTH KNEE FLEXION AND HIP EXTENSION, ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE STIMULUS FOR HAMSTRING DEVELOPMENT.

GLUTE-HAM RAISES (GHRs) – BODYWEIGHT VARIATIONS

THE GLUTE-HAM RAISE IS A CORNERSTONE EXERCISE FOR HAMSTRING DEVELOPMENT. WHILE TRADITIONALLY PERFORMED ON A GHR MACHINE, ATHLEAN-X DEMONSTRATES EFFECTIVE BODYWEIGHT MODIFICATIONS. ONE COMMON VARIATION INVOLVES ANCHORING THE FEET UNDER A STURDY PIECE OF FURNITURE OR USING A PARTNER TO HOLD THEM DOWN, THEN LOWERING THE TORSO FROM A KNEELING POSITION WITH CONTROL, AND USING THE HAMSTRINGS TO PULL BACK UP. THIS EXERCISE PLACES A TREMENDOUS ECCENTRIC LOAD ON THE HAMSTRINGS AS YOU RESIST GRAVITY ON THE WAY DOWN AND A STRONG CONCENTRIC LOAD ON THE WAY UP.

NORDIC HAMSTRING CURLS

SIMILAR TO GHRs IN THEIR EFFECTIVENESS, NORDIC HAMSTRING CURLS ARE AN EXTREMELY CHALLENGING BODYWEIGHT EXERCISE. PERFORMED FROM A KNEELING POSITION WITH FEET ANCHORED, THE INDIVIDUAL SLOWLY LOWERS THEIR TORSO TOWARDS THE FLOOR, EXTENDING THE HIPS AND STRAIGHTENING THE LEGS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ALL WHILE KEEPING THEIR CORE TIGHT AND BACK STRAIGHT. THE HAMSTRINGS WORK ECCENTRICALLY TO CONTROL THIS DESCENT. THE CONCENTRIC PHASE, PULLING YOURSELF BACK UP, IS OFTEN THE MOST DIFFICULT PART AND MAY REQUIRE ASSISTANCE OR MODIFICATION INITIALLY.

SINGLE-LEG ROMANIAN DEADLIFTS (RDLs)

THE SINGLE-LEG RDL IS A FANTASTIC EXERCISE FOR TARGETING THE HAMSTRINGS AND GLUTES UNILATERALLY. STANDING ON ONE LEG, HINGE AT THE HIPS WHILE KEEPING THE STANDING LEG SLIGHTLY BENT AND THE BACK STRAIGHT. EXTEND THE NON-WORKING LEG BEHIND YOU FOR BALANCE. LOWER YOUR TORSO TOWARDS THE FLOOR UNTIL YOU FEEL A STRETCH IN THE HAMSTRING OF THE STANDING LEG, THEN RETURN TO THE STARTING POSITION BY SQUEEZING THE GLUTES AND HAMSTRINGS. THIS EXERCISE CHALLENGES HAMSTRING FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTH THROUGH HIP EXTENSION.

GOOD MORNINGS (BODYWEIGHT)

WHILE OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH BARBELLS, BODYWEIGHT GOOD MORNINGS CAN STILL PROVIDE A BENEFICIAL STRETCH AND ENGAGEMENT FOR THE HAMSTRINGS. STANDING WITH FEET HIP-WIDTH APART AND A SLIGHT BEND IN THE KNEES, HINGE AT THE HIPS, KEEPING YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND CHEST UP. LOWER YOUR TORSO TOWARDS THE FLOOR UNTIL YOU FEEL A STRETCH IN YOUR HAMSTRINGS, THEN RETURN TO AN UPRIGHT POSITION. THE EMPHASIS HERE IS ON CONTROLLED MOVEMENT AND FEELING THE STRETCH THROUGH THE POSTERIOR CHAIN.

BRIDGE VARIATIONS

WHILE BRIDGES PRIMARILY TARGET THE GLUTES, VARIATIONS CAN INCREASE HAMSTRING ACTIVATION. A SINGLE-LEG GLUTE BRIDGE, FOR INSTANCE, REQUIRES MORE STABILIZATION AND HAMSTRING ENGAGEMENT. FOR AN EVEN GREATER HAMSTRING FOCUS, TRY A VARIATION WHERE YOU WALK YOUR FEET FURTHER AWAY FROM YOUR HIPS, INCREASING THE LEVER ARM AND THE DEMAND ON THE HAMSTRINGS TO EXTEND THE HIP. ANOTHER EFFECTIVE VARIATION IS THE LYING HAMSTRING CURL BRIDGE, WHERE YOU LIE ON YOUR BACK WITH KNEES BENT AND FEET FLAT, THEN LIFT YOUR HIPS AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRY TO PULL YOUR HEELS TOWARDS YOUR GLUTES, ENGAGING THE HAMSTRINGS THROUGHOUT THE MOVEMENT.

PROPER FORM AND TECHNIQUE FOR MAXIMUM ENGAGEMENT

ACHIEVING THE FULL BENEFITS OF BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES HINGES ON METICULOUS ATTENTION TO FORM. INCORRECT EXECUTION NOT ONLY REDUCES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXERCISE BUT ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES THE RISK OF INJURY. THE ATHLEAN-X PHILOSOPHY STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF MIND-MUSCLE CONNECTION AND CONTROLLED MOVEMENTS TO MAXIMIZE HAMSTRING ACTIVATION.

KEY PRINCIPLES INCLUDE MAINTAINING A NEUTRAL SPINE THROUGHOUT ALL MOVEMENTS, ENGAGING THE CORE TO STABILIZE THE TORSO, AND CONTROLLING THE TEMPO. FOR EXERCISES LIKE NORDIC CURLS OR GHR VARIATIONS, THE ECCENTRIC (LOWERING) PHASE SHOULD BE DELIBERATELY SLOW, ALLOWING THE HAMSTRINGS TO WORK MAXIMALLY TO RESIST GRAVITY. THE CONCENTRIC (LIFTING) PHASE SHOULD BE EXPLOSIVE BUT CONTROLLED, FOCUSING ON SQUEEZING THE HAMSTRINGS AT THE PEAK CONTRACTION. IN HIP HINGE MOVEMENTS LIKE SINGLE-LEG RDLs AND BODYWEIGHT GOOD MORNINGS, THE FOCUS IS ON HINGING AT THE HIPS, NOT ROUNDING THE BACK, AND FEELING THE STRETCH DEEP WITHIN THE HAMSTRING MUSCULATURE. ENSURE A FULL RANGE OF MOTION IS UTILIZED, REACHING THE POINT OF STRETCH WITHOUT COMPROMISING FORM.

PROGRESSION STRATEGIES FOR BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING WORKOUTS

AS YOUR BODY BECOMES STRONGER, SIMPLY REPEATING THE SAME EXERCISES WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A PLATEAU. ATHLEAN-X EMPHASIZES PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD, WHICH CAN BE ACHIEVED IN NUMEROUS WAYS EVEN WITHOUT ADDING EXTERNAL WEIGHT. THE GOAL IS TO CONTINUALLY CHALLENGE THE HAMSTRINGS TO ADAPT AND GROW STRONGER.

- **INCREASE TIME UNDER TENSION:** SLOW DOWN THE ECCENTRIC (LOWERING) AND CONCENTRIC (LIFTING) PHASES OF EACH EXERCISE. PAUSING AT THE PEAK CONTRACTION OR THE BOTTOM OF THE MOVEMENT CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE CHALLENGE.
- **INCREASE REPETITIONS AND SETS:** GRADUALLY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF REPETITIONS PER SET OR THE NUMBER OF SETS PERFORMED FOR EACH EXERCISE.
- **DECREASE REST PERIODS:** SHORTENING THE REST TIME BETWEEN SETS WILL INCREASE THE OVERALL INTENSITY AND METABOLIC STRESS ON THE MUSCLES.
- **IMPROVE RANGE OF MOTION:** AS FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTH INCREASE, AIM TO PERFORM EXERCISES THROUGH A DEEPER RANGE OF MOTION, ALWAYS PRIORITIZING PROPER FORM.
- **UNILATERAL TRAINING:** EXERCISES LIKE SINGLE-LEG RDLs AND SINGLE-LEG BRIDGES INHERENTLY PROVIDE A GREATER CHALLENGE. AS YOU PROGRESS, YOU CAN INCREASE REPS OR FOCUS ON EVEN SLOWER TEMPOS.
- **TEMPO MANIPULATION:** EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT TEMPOS, SUCH AS A 3-SECOND ECCENTRIC, 1-SECOND PAUSE, AND EXPLOSIVE CONCENTRIC, TO FIND WHAT MAXIMALLY CHALLENGES YOUR HAMSTRINGS.
- **REDUCE LEVERAGE:** FOR EXERCISES LIKE BODYWEIGHT GHRs OR NORDIC CURLS, GRADUALLY MOVE TOWARDS A LESS ADVANTAGEOUS BODY POSITION THAT REQUIRES MORE HAMSTRING STRENGTH TO CONTROL THE MOVEMENT.

INTEGRATING BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES INTO YOUR ROUTINE

INCORPORATING BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES EFFECTIVELY REQUIRES STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN YOUR OVERALL TRAINING PROGRAM. THEY CAN BE ADDED TO LEG DAYS, USED AS FINISHERS, OR EVEN PERFORMED ON RECOVERY DAYS TO PROMOTE BLOOD FLOW AND ACTIVE RECOVERY, DEPENDING ON INTENSITY AND VOLUME. THE KEY IS TO ENSURE THEY COMPLEMENT, RATHER THAN DETRACT FROM, YOUR PRIMARY TRAINING GOALS.

FOR INDIVIDUALS LOOKING TO BUILD MASS, THESE EXERCISES CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO THEIR REGULAR LEG WORKOUTS, PERHAPS AS ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS AFTER COMPOUND LIFTS LIKE SQUATS AND DEADLIFTS, OR AS PRIMARY MOVEMENTS IF HEAVY LIFTING IS NOT AN OPTION. FOR ATHLETES, FOCUSING ON EXPLOSIVE TEMPO AND PLYOMETRIC-STYLE VARIATIONS CAN ENHANCE POWER AND SPEED. CONSIDER PERFORMING THEM AT THE END OF A WORKOUT AS A HIGH-INTENSITY FINISHER TO

MAXIMIZE MUSCLE FATIGUE AND STIMULATE GROWTH. ALTERNATIVELY, A LOWER-INTENSITY, HIGHER-VOLUME APPROACH CAN BE BENEFICIAL FOR ENDURANCE AND ACTIVE RECOVERY. ALWAYS LISTEN TO YOUR BODY AND ADJUST VOLUME AND INTENSITY BASED ON YOUR RECOVERY CAPACITY.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID WITH BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING TRAINING

EVEN WITH BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES, SEVERAL COMMON PITFALLS CAN HINDER PROGRESS AND INCREASE INJURY RISK. BEING AWARE OF THESE MISTAKES IS CRUCIAL FOR MAXIMIZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR TRAINING AND ENSURING LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

- **POOR FORM AND TECHNIQUE:** THIS IS THE MOST CRITICAL MISTAKE. ROUNDING THE BACK DURING HIP HINGES OR NOT CONTROLLING THE ECCENTRIC PHASE OF CURLS CAN LEAD TO INEFFECTIVE TRAINING AND POTENTIAL INJURIES LIKE HAMSTRING STRAINS.
- **LACK OF MIND-MUSCLE CONNECTION:** PERFORMING THE MOVEMENT MECHANICALLY WITHOUT ACTIVELY FOCUSING ON ENGAGING AND SQUEEZING THE HAMSTRINGS MEANS YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EACH REPETITION.
- **NEGLECTING THE ECCENTRIC PHASE:** THE ECCENTRIC PORTION OF AN EXERCISE IS OFTEN WHERE THE MOST MUSCLE DAMAGE AND SUBSEQUENT GROWTH OCCURS. RUSHING THROUGH THE LOWERING PHASE DRASTICALLY REDUCES THE STIMULUS.
- **INSUFFICIENT RANGE OF MOTION:** NOT PERFORMING EXERCISES THROUGH THEIR FULL RANGE OF MOTION LIMITS THE MUSCLE'S ABILITY TO STRETCH AND CONTRACT EFFECTIVELY, HINDERING OVERALL DEVELOPMENT.
- **OVERTRAINING OR UNDERTRAINING:** PERFORMING TOO MUCH VOLUME WITHOUT ADEQUATE RECOVERY CAN LEAD TO BURNOUT AND INJURY. CONVERSELY, NOT DOING ENOUGH, OR NOT PROGRESSING, WILL RESULT IN STAGNATION.
- **IGNORING PROGRESSION:** STICKING TO THE SAME REPS, SETS, AND TEMPOS INDEFINITELY WILL PREVENT FURTHER GAINS. IMPLEMENTING PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD IS ESSENTIAL.
- **OVER-RELIANCE ON ASSISTANCE:** WHILE USING ASSISTANCE IS NECESSARY FOR SOME CHALLENGING EXERCISES LIKE NORDIC CURLS, BECOMING OVERLY RELIANT ON IT WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO INCREASE INDEPENDENCE CAN STALL PROGRESS.

FAQ

Q: ARE BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES AS EFFECTIVE AS WEIGHT TRAINING FOR BUILDING MUSCLE?

A: BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES CAN BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE FOR BUILDING MUSCLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN EMPLOYING ADVANCED TECHNIQUES LIKE HIGH REPS, SLOW TEMPOS, AND PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD STRATEGIES AS ADVOCATED BY ATHLEAN-X. WHILE HEAVY WEIGHTS OFFER A DIFFERENT STIMULUS, BODYWEIGHT TRAINING CAN ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT HYPERTROPHY AND STRENGTH GAINS BY MAXIMIZING MUSCLE ACTIVATION AND TIME UNDER TENSION.

Q: HOW CAN I MAKE BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES MORE CHALLENGING IF THEY BECOME TOO EASY?

A: TO INCREASE THE CHALLENGE OF BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES, FOCUS ON PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD. THIS CAN INCLUDE INCREASING REPETITIONS, PERFORMING MORE SETS, DECREASING REST PERIODS, SLOWING DOWN THE TEMPO (ESPECIALLY THE ECCENTRIC PHASE), INCREASING THE RANGE OF MOTION, OR MODIFYING EXERCISES TO REDUCE LEVERAGE AND INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY.

Q: WHAT IS THE PRIMARY BENEFIT OF FOCUSING ON HAMSTRING STRENGTH THROUGH BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES?

A: THE PRIMARY BENEFITS INCLUDE DEVELOPING A STRONGER POSTERIOR CHAIN, IMPROVING ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE (E.G., SPRINTING, JUMPING), ENHANCING POSTURE, INCREASING RESILIENCE AGAINST LOWER BACK PAIN, AND PREVENTING COMMON INJURIES LIKE HAMSTRING STRAINS AND TEARS.

Q: HOW OFTEN SHOULD I INCORPORATE BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES INTO MY WORKOUT ROUTINE?

A: THE FREQUENCY DEPENDS ON YOUR OVERALL TRAINING VOLUME AND RECOVERY CAPACITY. TYPICALLY, 1-3 TIMES PER WEEK, EITHER AS PART OF DEDICATED LEG WORKOUTS OR AS FINISHERS, IS RECOMMENDED. ENSURE ADEQUATE REST BETWEEN SESSIONS TARGETING THE SAME MUSCLE GROUPS.

Q: ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC ATHLEAN-X PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS HEAVILY ON BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES?

A: WHILE SPECIFIC PROGRAM NAMES CAN CHANGE, ATHLEAN-X CONSISTENTLY INTEGRATES FUNCTIONAL BODYWEIGHT MOVEMENTS, INCLUDING THOSE FOR HAMSTRINGS, INTO ITS VARIOUS TRAINING SYSTEMS. LOOK FOR PROGRAMS EMPHASIZING ATHLETICISM, MUSCLE BUILDING, OR FAT LOSS THAT OFTEN INCORPORATE THESE TYPES OF EXERCISES.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISE RECOMMENDED BY ATHLEAN-X?

A: THE NORDIC HAMSTRING CURL IS WIDELY CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES, DEMANDING SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH AND CONTROL TO PERFORM SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY. MODIFIED GLUTE-HAM RAISES ARE ALSO VERY DEMANDING.

Q: CAN BODYWEIGHT HAMSTRING EXERCISES HELP WITH KNEE PAIN OR INJURY PREVENTION?

A: YES, STRENGTHENING THE HAMSTRINGS, PARTICULARLY THROUGH BALANCED TRAINING THAT INCLUDES ECCENTRIC CONTROL AND PROPER FORM, CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE KNEE STABILITY AND RESILIENCE, HELPING TO PREVENT INJURIES AND POTENTIALLY ALLEVIATE SOME FORMS OF KNEE DISCOMFORT BY SUPPORTING THE KNEE JOINT.

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