

Eilish's Glute Activation Circuit

Strong glutes are not only essential to top athletic performance but they play a vital role in reducing your chance of injury. Discover the different exercises Eilish McColgan does to fire up the glutes.



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Eilish's Glutes Activation Circuit

There's a misconception that running strength comes mainly from the quads at the front of the leg. The real powerhouse are the glutes—otherwise known as your butt muscles. If you activate your glutes before running, or as part of your injury prevention routine, you'll achieve greater gains in the long term.

The glutes have two jobs when you're running:

- To help pull your leg back, once it's in contact with the ground.
- To stabilise your hips while you're standing on one leg (which is about half the time while running).

If your glutes aren't conditioned properly, it'll decrease the efficiency of your running affecting your force generation ability. Weak glutes can also increase the risks of injuries such as hips, lower back, runners knee (iliotibial / IT band syndrome).

Who better to teach us about the glutes than two-time Olympian and DNAfit ChangeMaker Eilish McColgan. In this guide, we'll show you the different exercises she does to fire up the glutes and ensure she runs as efficiently and economically as possible.



“I like to do it on my hard session days to ensure that my muscles are firing in the right order. It allows me to run a lot faster when I get into the work.”

Eilish McColgan, Olympic 5000m runner

Chapter 1

Let's meet your glute muscles

There are three muscles in your behind:

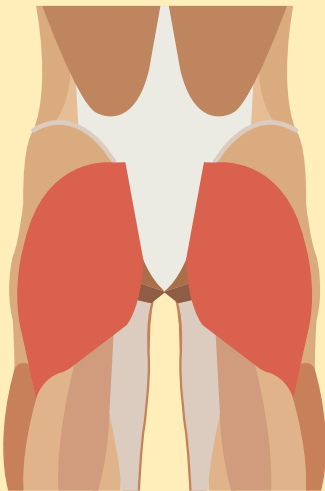
- Gluteus maximus
- Gluteus medius, and
- Gluteus minimus.

Gluteus maximus

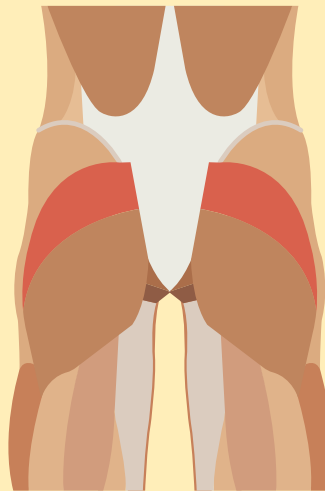
The Gluteus maximus provide power while running. To move your body forwards, you have to push backwards—otherwise known as hip extension. (Hip flexion would be bringing your knee towards your chest.) During running, this movement happens when your foot touches the ground and drives your leg behind you. The gluteus maximus, the largest of the glute muscles, helps perform this action along with your hamstrings.

Gluteus medius and minimus

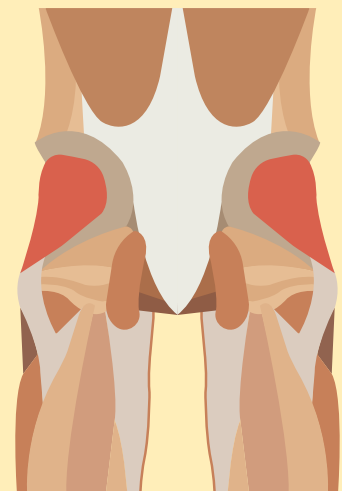
Your Gluteus medius and minimus provide stability while running. During running, you are, for the most part, standing on one leg. The gluteus medius and minimus are positioned on the side of the leg and contract to keep your hips stable. If they're weak, your pelvis will drop, creating a chain reaction of stress that will flow down your leg.



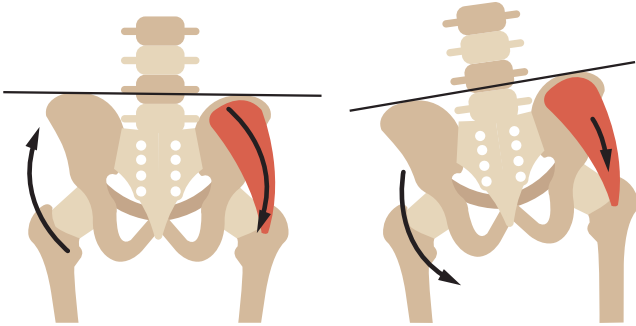
• Gluteus maximus



• Gluteus medius



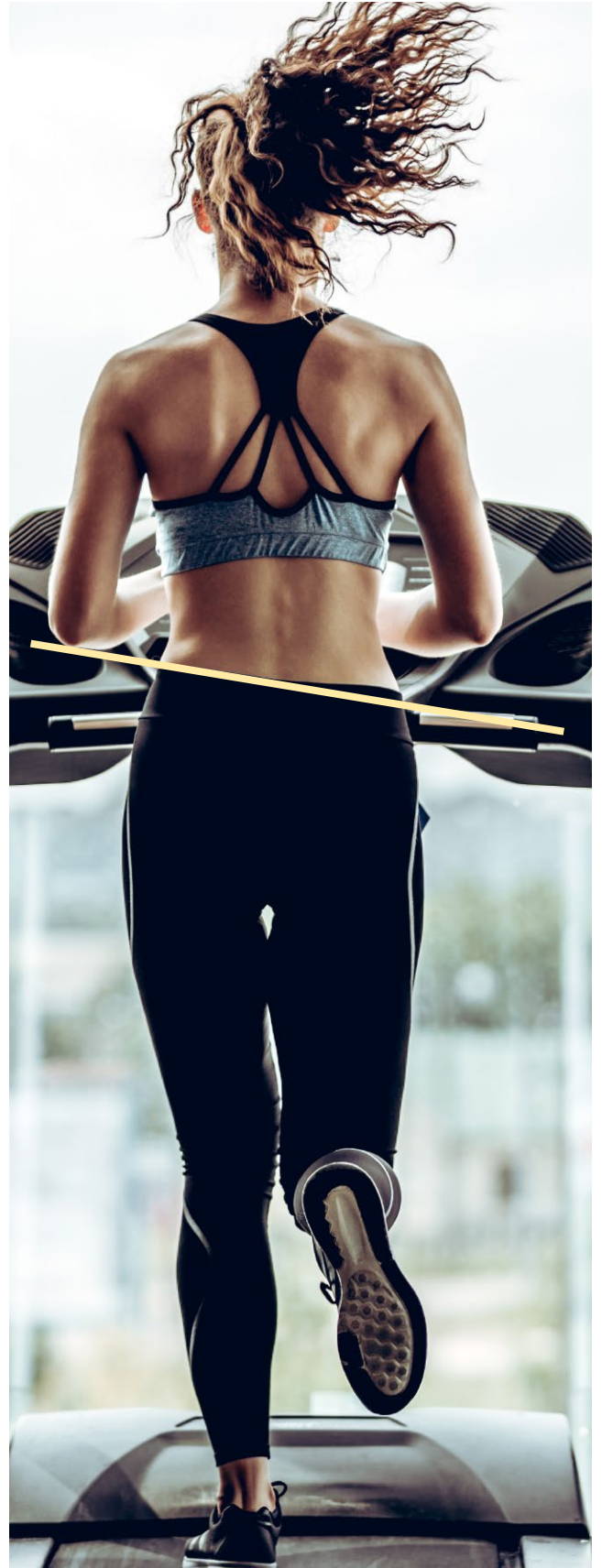
• Gluteus minimus



The gluteus medius keeps the hips level while running.

A quick test to check for weak gluteus medius and minimus is to stand on one leg to see if your hips drop to the side of the raised leg. If you see a running specialist, they may video you from behind and then replay you the clip. In slow motion, you'll be able to see if your hips are dropping.

If they do, you need to work on those glutes!



Are your hips falling to one side?

Why are my glutes weak?

Muscles work in pairs. Opposite to the gluteus maximus is the hip flexor, which brings the knee towards the chest. As we spend a lot of time sitting, the hip flexor muscle tends to shorten. The shorter the hip flexor becomes, the more inactive the glutes get.

As there are numerous other supporting muscles in the legs, when we have weak glutes, the other muscles compensate for this weakness.

However, bad movement patterns will ultimately cause an imbalance that will lead to injury, over time.

Our goal is to condition our glutes, so that they are strong enough to contribute effectively when running.



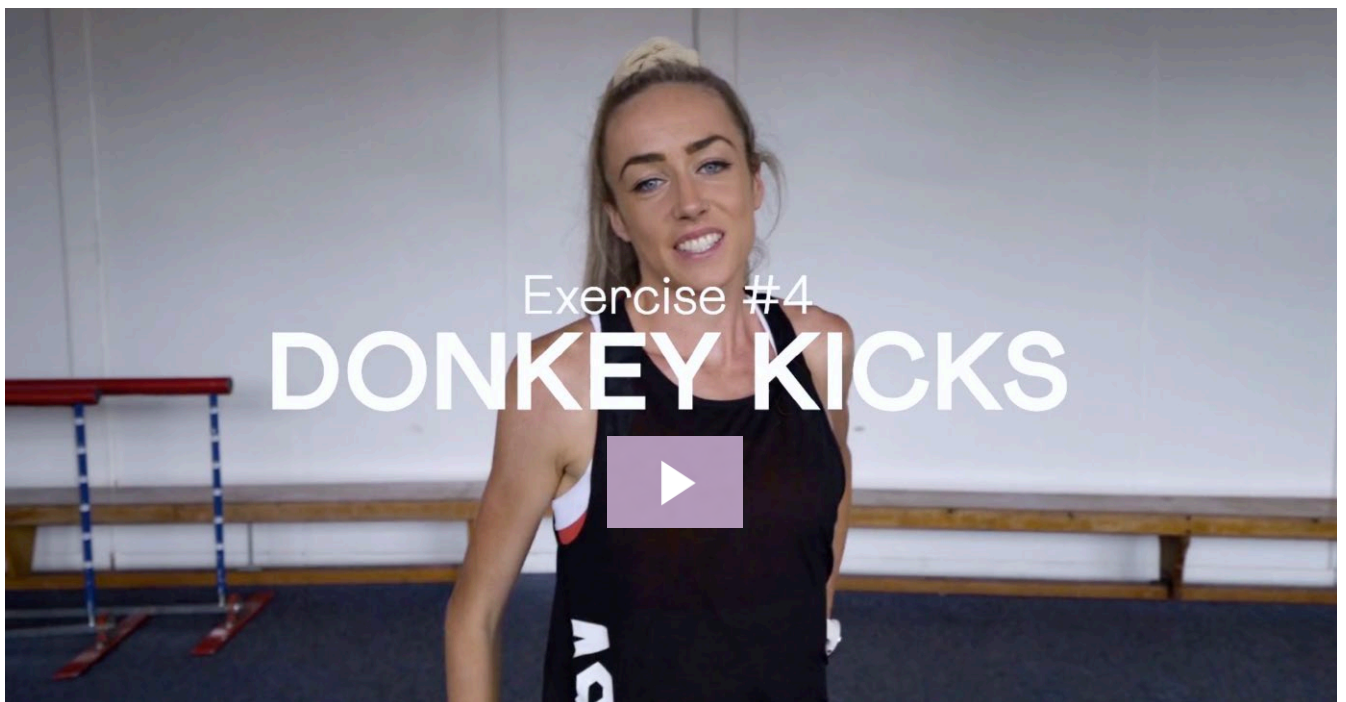
The 'couch stretch' helps lengthen the hip flexors and attenuate anterior pelvic tilt

Chapter 2

Eilish's Glutes Activation Circuit

Eilish makes sure she activates her glutes before every hard running session. All you need is a resistance band to go around your thighs. These often come in packs of several bands in different colours. You can choose the colour that offers the right resistance for you.

You can watch the video version of this circuit [here](#).



What's in the circuit:

1. Lateral crab walks
2. Diagonal crab walks
3. Standing kickback with abduction
4. Lying down clams
5. Donkey kicks

Exercise 1: Lateral crab walks

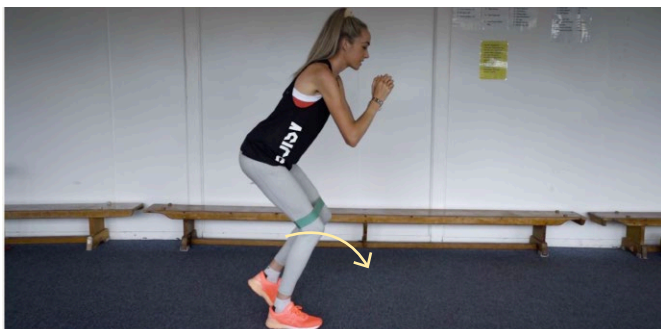
Crab walks strengthen all areas of the glutes, in a functional and weight-bearing position..



- Position the band just above the knee
- Sit down into your glutes
- Flatten your back and engage your core—do this by pulling your tummy towards your spine
- Start feet shoulder-width apart
- Take small steps to move sideways, 10 in one direction, then 10 back again
- Take care not to ‘stand up’ during the movement
- Repeat 3 times

Exercise 2: Diagonal crab walks

Also known as monster walks, diagonal crab walks strengthen the glutes in a functional way while improving balance.



- Position the band just above the knee
- Sit down into your glutes
- Flatten your back and engage your core—do this by pulling your tummy towards your spine
- Start feet shoulder-width apart
- Take a step diagonally forwards to the right with your right foot
- Bring the left foot to meet it, tap the left foot to the ground, then step the left foot diagonally to the left
- Take 10 steps forward, then 10 steps backwards
- Repeat 3 times

Exercise 3: Standing kickback with abduction

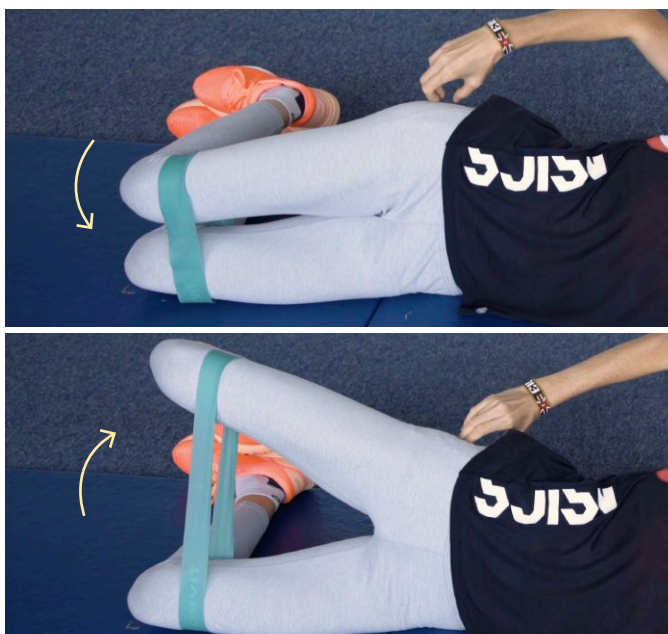
Another glute all-rounder, this exercise helps with balance while firing the gluteus maximus for hip extension.



- Put the band around your ankles
- Stand by a wall
- With a straight leg, kick the leg backwards and a little to the side
- Ensure the origin of the movement is from the glutes
- Do 10 reps on each leg
- Repeat 3 times

Exercise 4: Lying down clams

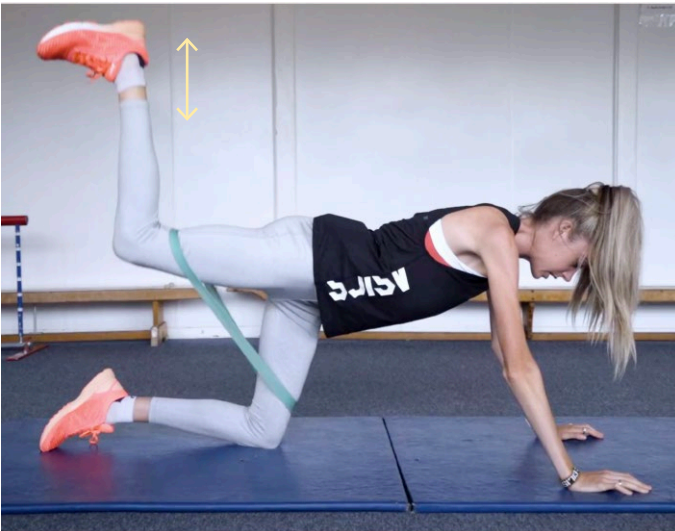
This exercise heavily targets the gluteus medius and minimus for a precision burn!



- Put the band just above your knee caps
- Lie on one side
- Have the legs bent with your heels aligned to your butt
- Rotate the top knee to the sky, ensuring the origin of the movement comes from the top glute
- Open the leg about 45 degrees, before returning the clam to close
- Ensure the feet stay together during the whole movement
- Do 10 reps on each leg
- Repeat 3 times

Exercise 5: Donkey kicks

Also known as a glute kickback, this exercise targets the gluteus maximus while helping the athlete focus on core stability.

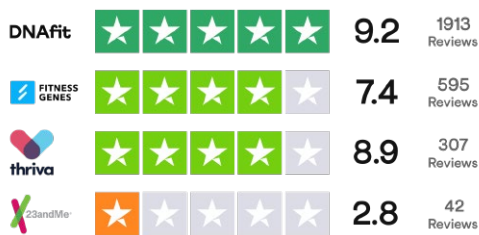
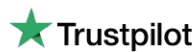


- Put the band just above your knee caps
- Kneel on all fours
- Have a neutral back
- Support your back by pulling your stomach towards your spine
- Take one leg and have the shin pointing toward the sky
- Push your foot towards the ceiling
- Avoid movement in the lower back by ensuring the origin of the movement is the glutes
- You'll feel this in both your glutes and your hamstring
- Do 10 reps on each leg
- Repeat 3 times

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Data as of 30th April 2019

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As genetics gains popularity, it pays to choose a company with robust science and the commitment to helping you get the most out of your results. For us, the test is just the beginning.

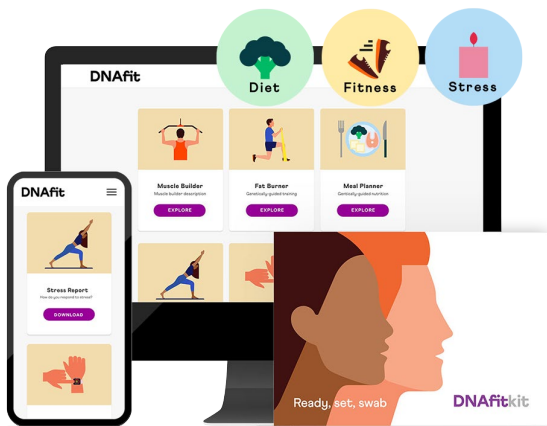
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- Your own personal health coach
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- Personalised meal plans and recipes
- DNAfit's dedicated research and development team - one simple test for a lifetime of ongoing discovery and change!



Discover Health Fit

Health Fit offers you a holistic, personalised wellness solution based on your unique genetic profile.



Discover Health Fit

Valuing your privacy

DNAfit's mission is to make the world a healthier place—we're not in the business of mining data. We maintain the highest possible standards of security and adhere to strict controls regarding data protection and security. We also self-regulate by spot checking our labs, to uphold our reputation as a reputable brand in the DTC genetic testing industry.

DNAfit adhere to the UK Data Protection Act, are GDPR compliant and are proud to be the first consumer genetics company to be awarded ISO27001 certification – the highest international standard for data security and management.

We only test for the genes we need and your sample is destroyed once the lab has completed the analysis. Your results are stored under an anonymised ID to create your reports. You are in full control over how you use your genetic information and who you share it with.