



### **The Doctor Writes Archive One**

I've been in private practice for about twenty years. I know a lot about orthopedic surgery. I can tell my patients some of what I know but it's hard to tell them everything and it's hard for them to remember everything when I do tell it. Patients can get tons of information off the internet about almost any aspect of orthopedic surgery you can think of. Runner's knee? Iliotibial band syndrome? Rotator cuff tears? It's all out there and lots of my patients already know what they have when they make their appointment. So I'm not going to talk about that kind of stuff here. And I'm going to get right down to business with my number one pet peeve.

**DO NOT DO SQUATS!** Let me emphasize the point. **DO NOT DO SQUATS!** There was a great scene in one of my favorite movies, "Brother Where Art Thou," where one of those guys turns around in the movie theater and says to the other two guys, "DO NOT SEEK THE TREASURE!" So if you've seen the movie, practice saying my statement about squats just like that and if you haven't seen it, then go see it and then practice my statement just like that. Make it your mantra. Don't forget it when you are thirty five and start going to the gym again and someone tells you that squats are a good thing to do to build your glutes.

*Learn* to recognize deceptive forms of the squat, like the deep knee bend and the lunge and its particularly egregious variety, the weighted lunge and especially the forward-moving-weighted-lunge. I don't know what it is called but I want to put a red circle with a cross hatch on those. You've seen people doing them around the track. Tell them to stop. It's obnoxious, besides being bad for their knees.

I googled "do not do squats, squats are bad, squats as a form of torture." I didn't find squat so I know I'm on to something new here. Not really. Everybody hates squats. It's just nobody's writing about it.

A lot of people are going to hate me, including my son, who loves to do squats. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't drink. He doesn't do drugs. But he does do squats. I'm working on him. I've got to admit that squats are a good way and maybe the best, most efficient and cheapest way to build glutes, quads and hamstrings. It accomplishes the goal and maybe for football players, it's the best way. But it's dangerous for their knees, for their cartilages and particularly their knee caps. There are some individuals who are biomechanically sound to do squats. They are rare and there's really no way to identify them or predict how long they can tolerate it. So guys, stop when you're done with football. All the rest of us...just say "no." Here's how it works. When you squat there is tremendous pressure on the knee cap since it is the fulcrum through which you bend and straighten your knee. That puts pressure on the delicate cartilage that lines the knee cap. When you are squatted beyond ninety degrees it also put tremendous pressure on the meniscus cartilage (the rubbery shock absorber cartilages between the two bones). Over a period of time (years for some...one squat for others) that can cause wearing of these delicate and important structures. Once that happens, arthritis begins to develop. And that can even take place at a young age.

For most of us, there are a lot of other exercises we can do to gently strengthen those muscle groups. Straight leg raises, quarter squats, leg curls and extensions with low resistance, stationary bike, elliptical trainers, swimming, and the list goes on. I see so many patients with knee pain and in quite a few, particularly those with knee cap pain, I can elicit a history of doing squats...or one of its subversive varieties. So when your personal trainer says he's going to get your butt into shape...beware of the squat and *just say "no."*