

How to get stronger legs

Although it may sound obvious to most people who ride regularly, having stronger legs means more muscle, which means more power, leading to more speed, which ends with you beating your mates more often without having to pull a muscle in the process.

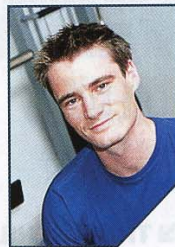
With a few simple exercises – such as squats, lunges, calf raises and step ups – we guarantee that you'll soon be tackling the slopes that you previously had to get off and push on. Simply follow these exercises (below and to the right) twice a week, doing 3x20 of each one for a total of six weeks and there will be a big difference.

All of these exercises will also work your core stability and prevent any muscle imbalances. As you get stronger, try adding weights by holding dumbbells in your hands and the improvements should be even more dramatic.

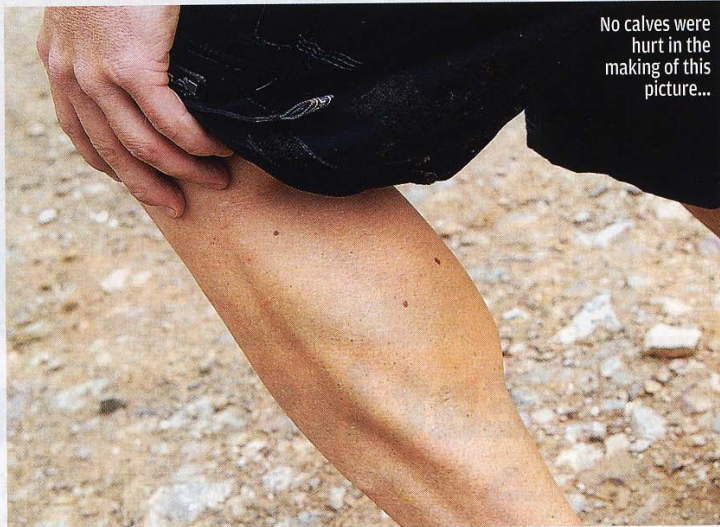
To get stronger by just being on the bike, try and do as many hills as possible to put your legs under more stress. Staying sat down in training and keeping your upper body still while maintaining a smooth pedal action will also help to make you stronger. Once a week, do a training session on the bike where you pedal in a gear which is two gears harder than normal for up to 10 minutes at a time.

Eat plenty of protein to ensure that your legs get maximum recovery (chicken, fish, eggs, etc). Without protein your muscles will not have the building blocks to get stronger. Drink more than two litres of water a day to keep your muscles well hydrated and allow maximum strength gains.

→ Spin those pedals harder and faster with some easy tips, courtesy of What Mountain Bike's resident fitness guru, **Andy Wadsworth**



Andy has raced the World Cup series as a privateer for two years, is a former Xterra (off-road triathlon) World Champion, runs his own personal training company,



No calves were hurt in the making of this picture...

Andy's 3 steps to fighting fitness



1 SQUATS Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and squat until your thighs are parallel to the floor. And try to keep your stomach muscles tight as you do it.



2 CALF RAISES Tense the muscles at the back of the lower leg to make you go up on your toes. Try doing them on both legs then try doing them on just one.



3 STEP UPS Place your leading foot on a bench or similar and raise your body up to the bench height, just using the front leg. Change after 10 repetitions.