

The Body Shop

HEAD-TO-TOE HELP FROM INJURY-PREVENTION PROS

Bare Feet

Strength train shoeless to prevent injuries

BAREFOOT RUNNING IS a hot topic in running circles these days. Even if you have no intention of ever parting with your cushy soles, you'll still benefit from shoeless strength training. Barefoot training develops the muscles of the toes, midfoot, heel, and ankle—26 muscles in all—that get a free ride in kicks. “Foot muscles can atrophy if you're in shoes all day long,” says Stephen Pribut, a podiatrist in Washington, D.C. Strengthening your feet and ankles enables the rest of your running parts—knees, hips, and back—to function their best and reduce injury risk. So after you run, slip off your shoes and socks and do a few simple exercises—calf raises, jumping jacks, balance on one foot—to warm up. Then try this barefoot training routine recommended by Pribut. —*Adam Bean*



WOBBLE BOARD BALANCE

Works feet, shins, calves; prevents shinsplints, Achilles strain

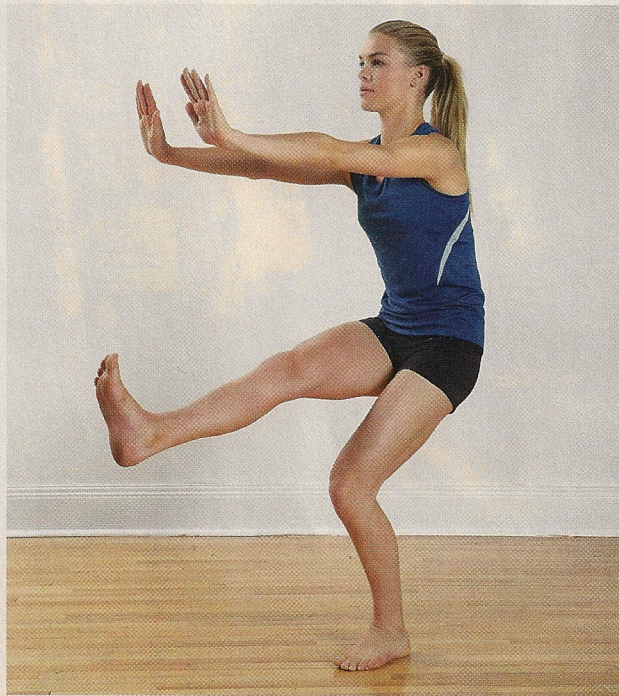
→ Place both feet on the board. Rock forward and back. Work up to 30 seconds of continuous wobbling. Take a break. Then rock side to side (above). Work up to 30 seconds. When this feels easy, combine these exercises to move the board in a circular motion.



TOE CURLS

Strengthens the foot; protects against shinsplints and plantar fasciitis; improves push-off power

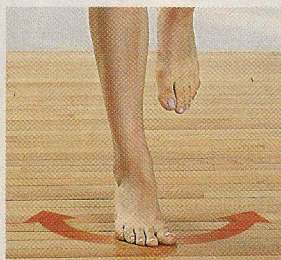
→ Either sitting or standing, place a small towel on the floor in front of you. Using the toes of one foot, gather the towel, gradually pulling it toward you. Repeat three times with each foot.



ONE-LEG SQUATS

Strengthens feet, legs, glutes; improves balance; protects against ankle sprains, shinsplints, and Achilles strain

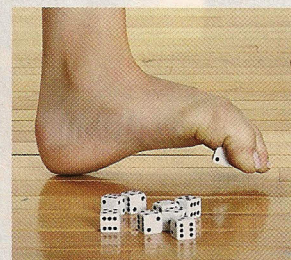
→ Lift one leg and try to keep it straight. Keeping your torso upright, slowly squat down. Rise back up. Start with eight to 12, and work up to 20. Too hard? Start with double-legged squats.



ONE-FOOT HOPS—WITH A TWIST

Strengthens feet and lower legs; improves balance

→ Hop on one foot. With each jump, face forward, and point your grounded foot to the left, forward, to the right, forward, left, forward, right, and so on. Do 15 to 20 hops per foot.



TOE PICKUPS

Strengthens feet; prevents shinsplints, plantar fasciitis

→ Place five to 10 small objects in front of you. Lift each one with the toes of one foot. Take the object and release it, forming another pile. Switch feet and move the pile back. Do three sets with each foot.



Watch a video demonstration of these barefoot strength-training exercises at runnersworld.com/barefeet.

PHOTOS: LILULEMON; WOBBLE BOARD: COURTESY FITTER FIRST/PERFORM BETTER