

Strengthening Your Feet

MOVE OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2012



In the past couple years the “barefoot” training movement has exploded. A majority of the shoe companies today have minimalistic or “barefoot” products. It comes from the idea that we are not meant to wear shoes all day, every day, from the time when we start to walk. The modern, Westernized shoe wearer tends to have weak and limited use of their feet compared to people and cultures that tend to go barefoot. We see dramatically higher rates of bunions, plantar fasciitis, sprained ankles and a host of other conditions of the feet and ankles. Shoes essentially give the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints of our feet a break. Imagine if you wore mittens on your hands all day and every day since infancy. You probably wouldn’t have half the fine motor skills you possess today. Looking at the feet, most people can’t even move their pinkie toes independently, an ability barefoot people acquire early and naturally.

Most sports and everyday activities require contact with the ground and our feet are the first link in the kinetic chain. If the foot is not able to fully handle the forces required of it, overtime different structures will be stressed and start to cause issues. The exercise below is designed to strengthen a muscle called your quadratus plantae.

THE MOVE

The quadratus plantae is the muscle that lies underneath the plantar fascia and can provide strength and support to the foot when strong and conditioned. It also can aid by increasing blood flow to the bottom of the foot which can help in removing metabolic wastes that accumulate in conditions

such as plantar fasciitis.

Begin by simultaneously drawing the top of the foot towards your shin (dorsiflexion) while flexing your toes down (like you're trying to grip something).



Then flex the top of the foot away (plantar flexion) while simultaneously pulling the toes back and outwards.



Repeat as many times as you can and then switch feet. When first learning this exercise, it is common to have the foot feel like it wants to cramp. You may also find it difficult to perform the movement. This is from the weakness of the foot muscles. Keep working on the movement and try adding reps each day. Perform one set of maximum repetitions and build up to 50 repetitions.

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