

CORE TRAINING is incredibly important to running form and injury prevention. Here are some starter exercises to get you going.

<p><u>Prone Core Bridge</u> - Lay on the floor on your stomach. Lift your body off the ground, supporting your upper body with your elbows directly under your shoulders and your forearms flat on the ground. Keep your body in a straight line from your shoulders to your heels and hold for 30 seconds. Work up to holding for 60 seconds or longer. (x10)</p>
<p><u>Side Plank</u> - Lie on your left side with your legs, hips, and shoulders in a straight line. Prop yourself up on your left forearm so your elbow is directly under your shoulder. Lift your hips off the floor to create a straight line running from your right shoulder down to your right ankle. Place your top arm along your side. Hold the position for 30 seconds, then lower your hip to the ground. Switch sides and repeat. Work up to holding for 60 seconds or longer. (x10 - 5 on each side)</p>
<p><u>Elbow-to-Knee Twisting Crunch (or Bicycle Crunch)</u> - Start out on the floor, on your back, with your knees raised and your hands interlaced behind your head/neck. Curl your left elbow toward your right knee, bringing them together over the center of your body. Return to the starting position and repeat with your right elbow toward your left knee. Continue alternating nonstop for one minute.</p>
<p><u>Reverse Crunch</u> - Start out on the floor, lying on your back with your arms by your sides. In one smooth motion, bring your feet up off the floor and crunch your knees toward your chest while pressing your hands into the floor. Crunch far enough to raise your hips off the floor. Lower your hips back to the floor and uncurl your legs until they are straight, with your feet one or two inches above the floor. Repeat nonstop for one minute.</p>
<p><u>Oblique Reach</u> - Sit with knees bent and feet on floor. Straighten right leg. Roll spine into a C-curve. Place left hand behind head and extend right arm. Twist body to the left, roll back a bit more (and hold for one count), then come up. Do five reps, then switch sides.</p>
<p><u>Knee Fold Tuck</u> - Sit tall, hands on floor, knees bent, squeezing a playground ball between them. Lift knees so shins are about parallel to the floor; extend arms. Pull knees toward shoulders, keeping upper body still. Bring knees back to starting position. Repeat 15 to 20 times.</p>
<p><u>Climbing Rope</u> - Sit with legs extended, feet turned out in a V position, toes pointed. Contract core muscles and roll spine into a C-curve. Lift arms and move them as if you were climbing a rope. Twist slightly with each reach. Do 20 reaches with each arm.</p>

LOWER BODY EXERCISES

Front Lunge: Stand with your feet hip-width apart, hands on hips. Keeping your chest lifted and back straight, take a large step forward (about three feet) with the right foot so the knee is bent 90 degrees and the thigh is parallel to the floor. Keep your knee centered over your foot. Push off the right foot to return to the starting position. Repetitions: Do eight lunges with the right leg; repeat with the left. Start with one set of eight reps on each leg and move up to three sets of 15.

Walking Lunge - Stand upright, feet together. Take a controlled step forward with your left leg. Lower hips toward the floor and bend both knees (almost at 90 degree angles). The back knee should come close but never touch the ground. Your front knee should be directly over the ankle and the back knee should be pointing down toward the floor. Push off with your right foot and bring it forward to starting position, This completes one rep. Next step forward and repeat with the right leg. Do two to three sets of 15 reps.

Side Lunge - Starting Position: Stand with your feet parallel, hip-width apart. Your hands are in a comfortable position to help you maintain your balance during the exercise. Keep your head over your shoulder and your chin tipped and slightly upward. Shift your weight onto your heels. Engage your abdominals to stabilize the spine. Pull the shoulder blades down and back. Try to maintain these engagements throughout the exercise. Inhale and slowly step to the right while keeping your weight into your left heel. Both feet are still facing forward. Once your right foot is firmly placed on the floor, begin to shift your weight toward the right foot, bending the right knee and pushing the hips back. Continue to lunge until your shinbone is vertical to the floor and your right knee is aligned with the second toe of your right foot. Your left leg should be as straight as possible and your body weight should be distributed into the right hip. The heels of both feet should stay flat on the floor. Your arms can be positioned where necessary to help maintain your balance. Exhale and push off firmly with your right foot, returning to starting position. Repeat the movement for the opposite side.

Exercise variation: Reaching for your right foot with your left hand will emphasize hip flexion (alternate with the right hand reaching for the left foot).

UPPER BODY EXERCISES

Chest - Push ups on stability ball - Assume a kneeling push-up position in front of a fitness ball; place your hands on the ball a little wider than shoulder-width. Tighten your core muscles by pulling in your belly button; keep your back straight. Maintaining good posture, slowly lower your body toward the ball until your chest almost touches the ball. Do not let your abdominals sag. Repeat 10 to 15 slow and controlled repetitions.

Back - Rows - Attach rubber tubing to a door hinge or secure it around a stationary object. Sit tall on the edge of a bench or on a stability ball. With arms extended in front of the chest, pull the handles of the tubing towards you, palms facing towards your body; squeeze your shoulder blades together without shrugging your shoulders up, pause and slowly return arms to starting position while keeping tension in your arm and back muscles. Repeat for 10 to 15 repetitions.

Shoulder - Lateral raises - Sit tall on a stability ball; tighten your abdominals to engage the core muscles. Hold dumbbells with your arms straight, palms facing in. Lift your arms out laterally to approximately shoulder height. Pause and slowly return to starting position. Do not allow your body to rock or lean during the exercise. This exercise may also be done standing. Repeat 10 to 15 repetitions.

Triceps - Extensions - Sit tall on a stability ball; tighten your abdominals to engage the core muscles. Hold a medicine ball or dumbbell behind your head with both hands, elbows pointed towards the ceiling. Maintaining a neutral spine, lower and raise the weight by bending and then straightening your arms. Do not pull your elbows forward; they should stay over your shoulders. Repeat 10 to 15 repetitions.

Biceps Curls - Stand tall holding dumbbells with your palms facing out, shoulder-width apart (hands should be just outside each hip). Keep your knees slightly bent, abdominals contracted. Bend your elbows and curl dumbbells up toward your shoulders without bringing your elbows forward; slowly lower the dumbbells to starting position. Repeat 10 to 15 repetitions.

HIP AND LEG STATIC STRETCHES

Hamstring stretch - Lie on your back with your legs extended and your back straight. Keep your hips level and your lower back down on the floor. Bend your right knee towards your chest, keeping your left leg extended on the floor. Slowly straighten your right knee, grabbing the back of your leg with both hands. Pull your leg towards your chest gently while keeping both hips on the floor. Breathe deeply and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on opposite side. To reduce the intensity of this stretch, bend the knee of the stretching leg.

Quadriceps stretch - Stand tall, holding onto a chair or wall for balance if necessary. Keep your feet hip-width apart, your back straight and your feet parallel. Reach back and grab your left foot in your left hand, keeping your thighs lined up next to each other and left leg in line with the hip (not pulled back behind you). Breathe deeply and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.

Piriformis Stretch 1: Lie on your back with your legs extended and your back straight. Keep your hips level and your lower back down on the floor. Bend your left knee, placing left foot flat on the floor. Cross your right ankle at your left knee. Grab the back of your left thigh and hug your legs towards your chest. Place your right elbow on the inner portion of your right knee and push it slightly to the side. Breathe deeply and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on opposite side. To reduce the intensity of this stretch, don't bring your legs towards your chest as much.

Piriformis Stretch 2 - Lie on your back with your legs extended and your back straight. Keep your hips level and your lower back down on the floor. Bend your right knee towards your chest, grabbing it with your left hand. Place your right hand out to the side. Keeping your shoulder blades square (on the mat) use your left hand to guide your right knee across your body and towards the floor on your left side. Breathe deeply and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on opposite side. Don't force your knee to the floor if your flexibility does not allow it.

Calf Stretch - Stand facing a wall, about 12 inches away from it. Extend your arms in front of your shoulders to place your hands flat on the wall, keeping the elbows bent. Keeping both feet flat, step or slide your left foot (pictured) back, lengthening your left leg and straightening your arms. You should feel the stretch in the calf of the back (straight) leg. The more you lower your heel to the floor, and the farther you slide your straight leg behind you, the deeper you will feel this stretch. Breathe deeply and hold for 10-30 seconds. Switch sides.

Iliotibial (IT) Band Stretch - With the left side of your body next to a wall, stand tall with your hand on the wall and your body an arm's length away from the wall. Cross your right leg (leg farthest from the wall) in front of your left leg (leg closest to the wall) and place your opposite hand on your hip, shoulders relaxed, feet flat on the floor. Breathe slowly and steadily as you push your left hip toward the wall, bending your left elbow. Keep the foot closest to the wall flat on the floor, both legs straight, and your back straight (no leaning forward or back). Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. Switch sides.