

GET MOVING

Strength and flexibility exercises

Dynamic warm-ups

The best way to prepare for activity is to warm up the entire body and mind through dynamic movement and stretching



Tip 1

Start slowly with a smaller range of motion in order to ease your body into motion.



Tip 2

Use your core right – from the very first movement – by pulling in your navel.



Tip 3

Once your muscles and joints are loosened up, increase the speed of movement and use your full range of motion.



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Together, all the way.®



Squats

Squats are an excellent, functional strengthening exercise for the lower body. Do 10–20 repetitions.



Step 1

Stand straight with your feet shoulder width apart, or slightly wider. Keep your feet parallel or with toes turned out slightly and equally. Clasp hands together at chest level.



Step 2

Lower your body by sitting back into the hips. Keep your weight into the heels, chest lifted.

Step 3

At the lowest point in your squat – squeeze the muscles in your “glutes.” Push through your heels to come back to a standing position.

Push-ups

This is a challenging but excellent upper body exercise when done correctly. Do 8-20 repetitions.



Level 1

Against the wall.



Level 2

On an incline, such as a counter top or bench.



Level 3

On the floor or ground.

Step-by-step

- Place hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart on wall/counter/floor (depending on your level). Form a strong plank position with your body. (See page 10 for more information on plank position.) Keep your elbows straight.
- Scoop your abdominals in, squeeze your glutes and lengthen behind the knees. Lower your body as far down as you can. Think of only bending your elbows and driving them outward to lower your body. Keep your shoulders away from your ears. Maintain the plank throughout the entire exercise.
- Go as low as you can while maintaining good form. Then push back up to start position.

Single leg balance

This exercise looks simple but many people are surprised to find it challenging.



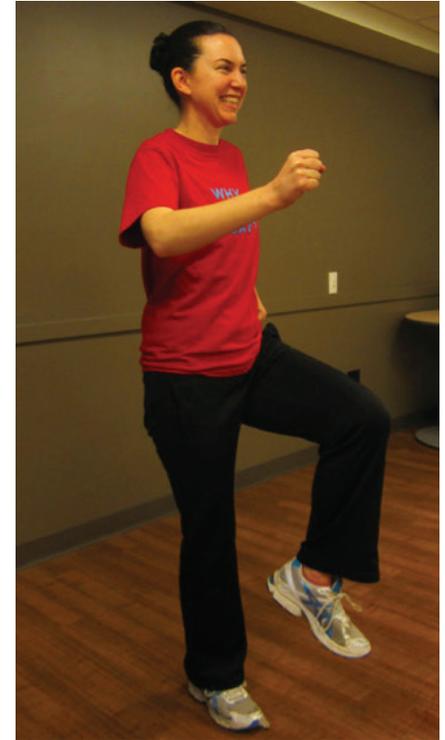
Level 1

Shift your weight onto one leg, with opposite toe in contact with floor. Hold 30–45 seconds.



Level 2

Level 1 single leg stance. Raise your knee so your foot is lifted off ground. Balance for 30–60 seconds.



Level 3

Level 2 single leg stance. Swing arms back and forth for 60 seconds. Repeat on other side.

Step-by-step

- › Stand up tall with core engaged and shift your weight over to your right leg, stacking your bones (right shoulder, hip, knee and ankle) over each other. Either a straight or slightly bent (“soft”) knee is fine, as long as you are very lifted from within.
- › Squeeze your glutes even more on your right side.
- › Raise your leg/knee/arms (depending on your level).
- › Hold and repeat on the left side.

Wall/floor rows

Rows are the best exercises for the upper and middle back, and therefore can help improve your posture. This exercise is a way to mimic a cable or weighted row exercise you might do in a gym. Do 10 repetitions.



Level 1

The wall “row” is for those who cannot get down onto the floor or when there is no available floor space.

Lean your shoulders and upper back against a wall while standing, or sit on a bench with a back. Position your elbows along the wall. Bend your arms. Keep your arms at any height, just make sure they don’t rise above your shoulder level.

Squeeze your shoulder blades together while pushing with the elbows to lift your upper back off the wall. Hold, count to 3 and release to the start position.



Level 2

For the floor “row,” lie on your back with arms down by your side. Make a fist with thumbs toward the ceiling. Push down into the floor using your entire arms to lift your upper back off the floor. Hold, count to 3, and release to the start position.

Quadruped pointers

The main goal of this exercise is core stability with an emphasis on strengthening posterior muscle groups. This exercise can be done on an incline starting with weight on hands and feet, or on the floor on your hands and knees. Quadruped refers to being “on all fours.” Do 5-10 repetitions on each side.



Level 1

From an incline position, lift one leg at a time off the floor. Repeat with just one arm at a time.



Level 2

From an incline position, reach the arm and lift the opposing leg at the same time.



Level 3

From all fours on the floor, reach the opposite arm and leg long, at the same time.

Step-by-step

- Maintain a neutral spine throughout this exercise. This entails having the correct amount of curvature in your neck and back (look closely at the photos). If you are on your hands and feet, keep your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees directly under your hips. On the incline, place your hands shoulder-width apart on a counter top or bench and form a strong plank position with your body. Keep your elbows and knees straight. Lift your heels.
- As you prepare to move, pull your navel into your spine and engage the shoulder girdle, lower back and hip area. When reaching one leg, really squeeze the glutes on the side that stays in contact with the floor. Try as hard as you can not to shift your weight or twist your body.
- Perform each repetition in a slow and controlled manner, alternating sides.

Bridges

Bridging is a wonderful exercise because of its effectiveness in strengthening the “glutes”, the most important core muscles of the hip. It also strengthens the hamstrings. Strong hip muscles mean a strong, stable lower body with less stress on the knees. Do 10-15 repetitions.



Step-by-step

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keep your thighs parallel and heels about 12” from your backside. Keep your arms down by your side.
- Draw your navel into your spine, which flattens your lower back to the floor. Squeeze your glutes and lift your hips as high as you can without arching your back. Keep your thighs parallel.
- Return to the start position and repeat.

Supine leg lifts

These leg lifts strengthen the hip flexors, which are the opposing muscles of the glutes. Working opposite muscle groups equally keeps the entire body strong and balanced. Supine leg lifts also strengthen the front of the thigh. Do 10-15 repetitions.



Step-by-step

- Lie on your back and bend one knee, keeping your foot on the ground.
- Straighten your other leg. Lift it slowly to knee level. Keep your kneecap pointed to the ceiling.
- Lower your leg to the ground.
- Repeat on the other side.

Roll downs

Roll downs are like sit-ups, only starting from an upright, seated position on the floor. They are a great way to articulate the vertebrae while strengthening your midsection. Do 8-15 repetitions.



Level 1

If you have difficulty getting on the ground, sit on the edge of a sturdy chair or bench.



Level 2

Lay on a mat or carpet.

Step-by-step

- With knees bent, feet on the floor hip-width apart, and arms reaching at chest level, slowly roll down toward the floor or chair back. Scoop your abs and tuck your pelvis under rolling through the lower to middle back. Stop before your feet begin to come off the floor or just before the bottom of your shoulder blades touch the floor or chair back.
- Reverse the movement, coming back to start position, leading with the top of the head.

Planks

Planks are one of the best strengthening exercises for your core. The core consists of all of the muscles in your torso and hips. This exercise uses all the muscles in your body and increases your heart rate. Hold for one minute.



Level 1

Elbows on a raised surface such as a bench or counter top. Place a towel under your elbows.



Level 2

On a flat surface, such as a mat or carpeted floor.

Step-by-step

- Place your elbows directly under your shoulders on the surface you've chosen. Straighten one leg at a time so that you're on the balls of your feet.
- Drop your hips in line with your shoulders. Keep a long neck. Your position should be that of a plank.
- Draw your navel into your spine and forcefully activate all your muscles while simultaneously feeling "long" from head to toe. Hold for as long as you can before losing form (or if your lower back starts to hurt), up to one minute.

Heel and toe raises

The heel raises (also called calf raises) strengthen the calves, while the toe raises strengthen the front portion of the lower leg (also called the anterior tibialis muscle). This exercise can help protect runners from shin splints. Do 15 repetitions each.



Heel

Stand straight with your feet parallel and under your hips. Just using your ankle, lift and lower your heels. Do not roll your ankles out – keep your weight over all five toes.



Toe

Reverse the “heel” exercise by lifting the front portion of your feet off the floor. Keep your knees straight. Resist the urge to rock your hips forward and backward.

Calf stretches



Step-by-step

- Stretch your calves by placing your hands against a wall at shoulder height. Bend the left knee and lunge back on your right leg.
- Squeeze the glutes of your right side while slightly tucking your pelvis under (your hip bones would tilt back). Drive your right heel down toward the floor.
- Hold for 30–60 seconds and repeat on the left.



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