

# EXERCISES FOR YOUR LOWER EXTREMITIES

Work wellness tips from Cigna Healthy Working Life®

Throughout the day, stretch your ankles, calves and achilles tendon to help treat and prevent ankle sprains, heel pain, and plantar fasciitis. And when you get a chance, strengthen your glutes and quads to keep your knees flexible and limber.

## 1. Alphabet trace

**Step 1:** Lift one foot slightly off the ground and let it hang naturally.

**Step 2:** Trace the entire alphabet with your foot by rotating your ankle.

**Step 3:** Repeat with your other ankle.



## 3. Calf stretch

**Step 1:** Put both hands against a wall.

**Step 2:** Place your feet hip-width apart with one in front of your torso and one behind.

**Step 3:** Lean into the wall, squeeze your glutes and drive your back heel into the floor.

**Tip:** Remember to keep your back knee straight and keep both feet pointed directly towards the wall.

**Step 4:** Repeat with your other leg.

**Challenge:** Move your back leg further back to get a little more stretch.

**Variation:** Move your back foot closer to your body and sit back into your heel to stretch out your Achilles.



## 5. Towel grab

**Step 1:** Sit with a towel on the floor in front of you.

**Step 2:** Use your toes to scrunch up the towel and hold.

**Step 3:** Extend your toes to push the towel away.

**Step 4:** Repeat with your other foot.



## 2. Towel stretch

**Step 1:** Sit on the floor with both legs straight out in front of you.

**Step 2:** Roll up a regular bath towel, grab an end in each hand and place the middle of the towel around the top of one foot.

**Step 3:** Gently pull the towel towards you and hold for 30 seconds.

**Tip:** Don't forget to keep your legs and back straight!

**Step 4:** Repeat with your other foot.



## 4. Lateral wall push

**Step 1:** Place one foot parallel against a wall.

**Step 2:** Push your foot towards the wall. Hold 6 seconds, release for 3.

**Step 3:** Repeat with your other foot.



## 6. Single leg balance

**Step 1:** Stand with one leg slightly raised.

**Tip:** Try balancing in your bare feet or socks. You can put your hand on a wall to help you balance if you need to. Remember to keep your body aligned!

**Step 2:** Balance for up to a minute.

**Step 3:** Repeat with your other leg.

**Challenge:** To make it harder to keep your balance, try crossing your arms over your chest or closing your eyes.



## 7. Quad sets

**Step 1:** Sit with your legs out in front of you and a towel under your knee area.

**Step 2:** Squeeze your glutes and thighs and hold for 6 seconds.

**Step 3:** Repeat with your other leg.



## 8. Side lying leg lift

**Step 1:** Lie on your side with your hips held high.

**Step 2:** Lift your top leg, hold for 3 seconds and lower without touching the ground.

**Tip:** Try to keep your leg rotated towards the floor and only lift to knee-height.

**Step 3:** Repeat 10 times on each leg. Complete 3 sets.



## 9. Bridge for hamstrings



**Step 1:** Lie flat on the floor with your knees bent and your palms facing upward.

**Step 2:** Lift your toes, but keep your heels on the ground.

**Step 3:** Raise your hips, pause at the top, then lower them.

**Step 4:** Repeat 15 times. Complete 3 sets.

**Modification:** If you're having trouble with the bridge, start with a simpler exercise: lean back on your elbows and squeeze your glutes 20 times.

## 10. Supine straight leg lifts



**Step 1:** Lie flat on the ground with one knee bent upward.

**Step 2:** Raise and lower your lower leg 10-20 times without letting it touch the ground.

**Tip:** Only raise your leg to knee-height, keeping your knee facing the ceiling.

**Step 3:** Repeat with your other leg. Complete 3 sets.

**Variation:** Hold your leg at the top for 3 seconds.

## 11. Heel raise

**Step 1:** Place your feet hip-width apart and parallel to one another.

**Step 2:** Lift your heels off the ground as high as possible, then lower them slowly.

**Tip:** Pull your abs in and squeeze your glutes a little bit. Be sure not to rock forward or backward. You can always use a wall for support if you need it.



## 12. Shallow squats

**Step 1:** Stand an arm's length behind a chair and place your finger tips on the top of the chair.

**Step 2:** Stick your butt out and your knees will automatically bend.

**Step 3:** Squeeze your glutes to stand back up straight.

**Step 4:** Repeat 15 times.

**Caution:** Your knees should not go past your toes. If you feel any pain, squat less deeply or skip this exercise.



Participating in Achilles running or other athletic events is potentially hazardous. You agree to follow the recommendations of the trainer, including being active every day, following tutorials, logging your activity and communicating with the trainer.

You assume all risks associated with participating, including but not limited to falls; all such risks being known and appreciated by you.

Please consult with your health care provider about your health concerns before performing any exercises and for help determining if an exercise program is right for you.

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