UW Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON MEDICAL CENTER

Foot Core Exercises

Making your feet stronger

This handout describes exercises that can help strengthen the muscles in the core of your foot.

What is the foot core?

Your *foot core* is the group of muscles deep inside your foot. When you have foot or ankle problems, it can help to strengthen these muscles.

Strengthening Exercises

Here are some exercises to help you strengthen your foot core:

Toe Yoga and Foot Doming

These exercises strengthen the *intrinsic* foot muscles. These are the muscles that help support your arch.

- Sit up straight with your feet about hips-width apart. Keep your feet below your knees.
- Using the foot you want to strengthen, do the 4 exercises shown below and on page 2. Most people find these movements challenging at first. Work to use the right muscles. Even making the effort will help improve your foot strength and stability.
- Rest briefly between repetitions (reps). Repeat 10 times during the day.

1. Start



2. Raise only your big toe



UW Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic | Box 354060
1959 N.E. Pacific St., Seattle, WA 98195 | 206.598.DAWG (3294)

3. *Raise only your other 4 toes*



4. *Foot doming: Raise only your arch (create a dome with your arch)*





Single leg balance

Single Leg Balance

Retraining your balance is very important. The muscles of the ankle and foot need to learn how to support your body weight.

- Stand on both feet on a firm surface. Slowly bend the knee of your healthy foot and lift that foot off the floor (see photo at left).
- Be sure to keep your body straight. Do not rotate or bend your body at your hips.
- Hold your knee up for as long as you can, for up to 20 seconds.
- Focus on feeling your foot core muscles as they work to keep your ankle steady. Use your big toe for extra support.
- Relax and repeat 5 times. If your foot feels sore, stop the exercise for now. The next time you do this exercise, hold your knee up for a shorter time.

Heel Raises

(See photos on page 3.)

- Form an arch in your foot, as you did in the foot doming exercise in Figure 4 above.
- Lift your heels, then slowly lower your heels to the ground.
- Repeat this exercise 10 times.
- Do these 10 reps 3 times a day.

UW Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic | Box 354060
1959 N.E. Pacific St., Seattle, WA 98195 | 206.598.DAWG (3294)





Heel raises

Toe Walking

- Stand in a comfortable position. Rise up onto both toes as high as you can.
- Keeping your knees straight, walk forward about 10 to 15 steps. Try to keep pressure on the ball of your foot where your big toe meets your foot. Do not rotate on the outside of your foot.
- Rest briefly. Repeat 2 to 3 times.





Toe walking

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

UW Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic: Call 206.598.DAWG (3294) and press 2 during clinic hours:

Monday-Thursday: 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Friday: 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday: 8 a.m. to 12 noon

Sunday: Closed

© University of Washington Medical Center
Published PFES: 2020
Clinician Review: 03/2020
Reprints on Health Online: https://healthonline.washington.edu

UW Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic | Box 354060
1959 N.E. Pacific St., Seattle, WA 98195 | 206.598.DAWG (3294)