

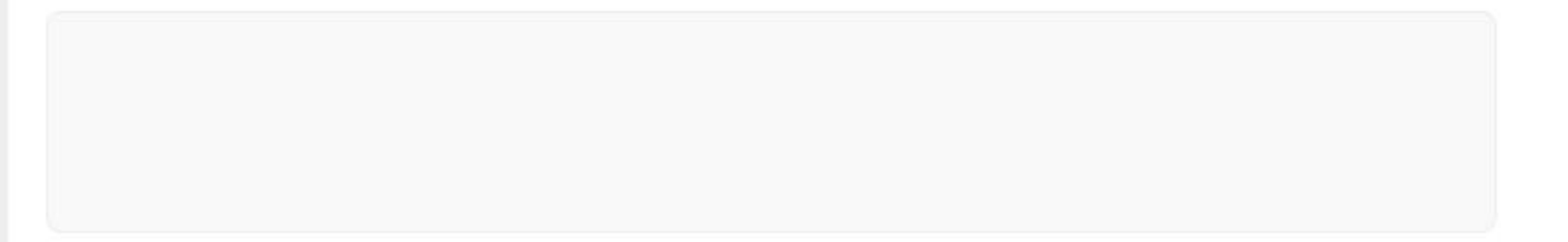
Training
Why You Should Train Barefoot
By Joseph Mazour Published On: 2022-01-24

Long ago in our history as human beings, we roamed the Earth hunting and gathering, wearing nothing but our bare feet or minimalist footwear. As we evolved and started wearing shoes to cushion ourselves from the rough terrain, the muscles in our feet and ankles slowly became weaker, and our toes immobile. This article will talk about practical ways to strength train barefoot to develop strong and healthy muscles in the foot and ankle.

Why Train Barefoot?

Imagine wearing mittens on your hands every time you leave the house. By having your fingers crammed into these mittens every day, the muscles in your fingers would grow weaker, and your ability to spread your fingers apart would get worse. We do the same thing to our feet by wearing shoes and socks every day. Since we do not go barefoot as often as our early ancestors did, our toes and the intrinsic muscles of our feet have lost strength and mobility. As athletes, the foot is our foundation to the body, so we mustn't forget about training the foot to have a well-rounded, strong, and stable body. Athletes with weak feet generally have collapsed arches, flat feet, and toe/ankle mobility. Addressing and correcting a weakness in the foot and ankle can positively affect the kinetic chain for the knees and hips. It can also improve the athletes' ability to create ground reaction forces (GRF). Any time an athlete sprints jumps or, changes direction, the foot and ankle must absorb the force adequately and create a contractive reaction to the movement.

The benefits of barefoot training include increased intrinsic muscle strength, improved balance and proprioception, and a higher rate of force development.



How To Train Barefoot

Our connection to the ground is crucial for proper movement and stability in lower body strength training. Whenever we are doing a squat or hip hinge or any movement where we are standing, it is important to remember that we need to have three points of contact on the foot. This is known as the foot tripod. At the bottom of your foot, pressure should be spread evenly across the base of both your big and pinky toe, as well as your heel. This distributes the weight evenly across the whole foot creating motor patterns that enforce the correct function of the intrinsic foot muscles.

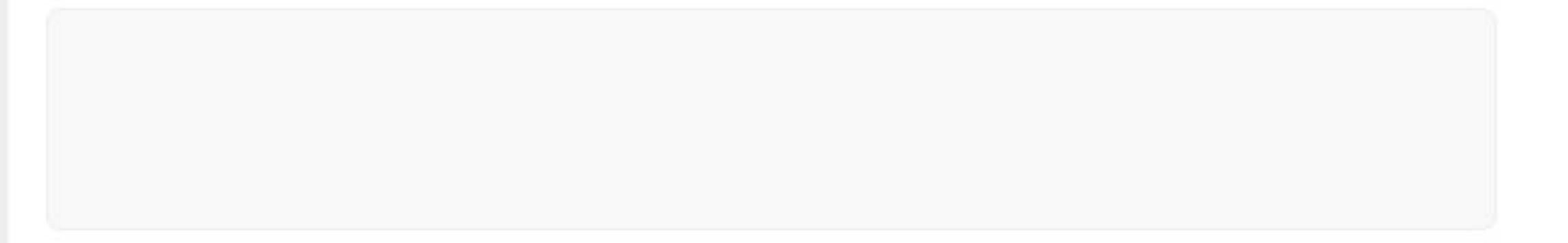
As with adding any new variation to a training program, athletes should begin training barefoot with appropriate intensity and volume to ensure they are not overtraining.

Exercises for Bare Foot Training

Single leg squat variations such as split squats, rear-foot elevated split squats (RFE SS), and pistol squats are excellent for developing single-leg strength and stability in the foot and ankle. Single leg deadlift variations are equally beneficial to creating foot and ankle strength and stability. The single-leg Romanian deadlift (SL RDL) requires the athlete to maintain balance and control in the foot as they hinge. Exercises that isolate the foot and ankle are also crucial for creating a stable base for any athlete. Exercises such as calf raises and spring ankle target specific weaknesses in the big-toe, arch of the foot, and ankle.

Safety

Training barefoot has plenty of benefits for the foot and ankle. However, wearing no shoes in a weight room poses risks for injury. Those who train barefoot should be very cautious of dropping and moving weights. Athletes should not train barefoot in a crowded weight room where other athletes drop weights. Do not train barefoot while doing plyometrics or Olympic weightlifting. Your foot may not be strong enough to absorb the force it puts into the ground and cause injury. Consult your doctor or physician before beginning to train barefoot and follow a well-planned training program written by a certified strength coach or trainer.



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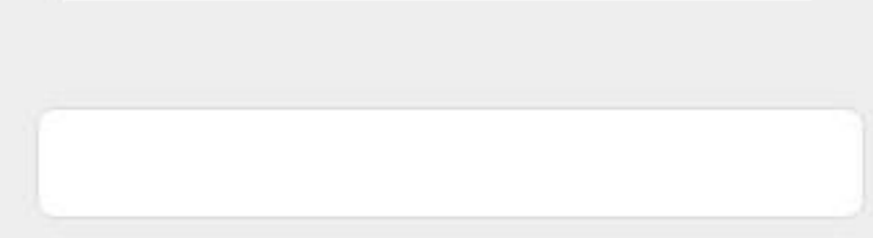
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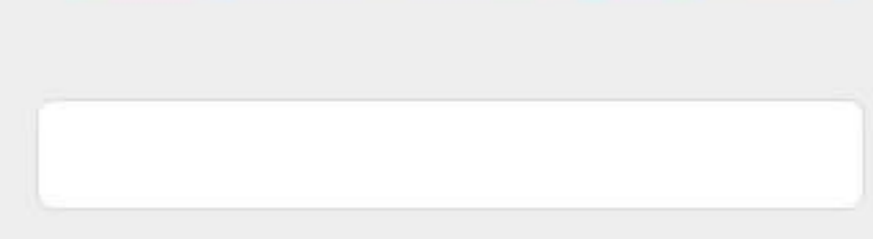
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