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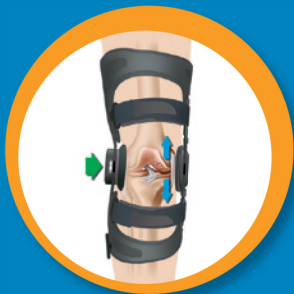


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SOLE SURVIVAL

5 EXERCISES FOR STRONG,
HEALTHY FEET

BY CATHERINE ROSCOE BARR AND STACY IRVINE

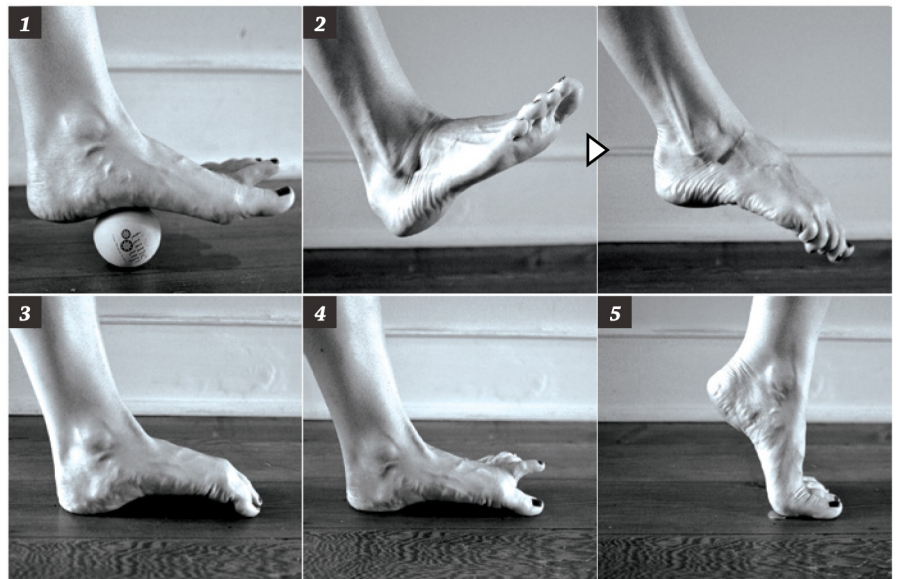
WHETHER YOU HAVE a collapsed arch or a high arch, are barefoot or in shoes, the ideal alignment when you're standing should be centred in three areas – the ball of your big toe, your heel and the lateral edge of your foot – with each toe gently gripping the ground.

A lifetime of constraint in shoes can reduce the strength, mobility and proprioception of our feet, the effects

of which can ripple up our bodies causing ankle, knee, hip, and back pain, as well as reduced performance in our athletic endeavors.

The dozens of muscles, tendons and ligaments in our feet need the same balanced, consistent fitness plan we bestow the rest of our body.

Try these 5 barefoot exercises – in this order – to warm up, engage and strengthen your feet. **Focus on quality, not quantity, for approximately 5 to 20 repetitions.*



Barefoot Exercises

1. ROLLING

Rolling is an effective way to loosen up the fascia that runs from your feet, up the back of your body, to the base of your skull. Roll the base of each foot from front-to-back, side-to-side, and in small circles, lingering on any spots that feel tight or crunchy. **Invest in massage-specific balls (like Yoga Tune Up) or substitute a squash, lacrosse or tennis ball.*

2. CONTROLLED ARTICULAR ROTATIONS

Controlled Articular Rotations are part of the Functional Range Conditioning program, which promotes joint stability and neuromuscular control. Sound complicated? It's just slow, focused ankle rotations. Easy! **For the following three exercises, start seated and progress to standing on both feet, one foot, then on an unstable surface, like an exercise mat.*

3. SHORT FOOT

Use as many muscles as you can for this foot-strengthening, arch-refurbishing exercise. Spread out your toes and drag them toward your heel, lifting your arch as high as you can. If you're having trouble, touch your arch with your hand to strengthen the neuromuscular connection.

4. PIANO TOES

Don't give up if you find this balance-boosting, kinesthetic-awareness-building exercise nearly impossible! It's a neuromuscular thing that just takes practice. Spread out your toes and press each one into the floor individually like you're playing a scale on the piano. Touching each toe as you try to move it will help you succeed.

5. QUARTER HEEL RAISES

This exercise is great for ankle stability and strength. With a quarter under the ball of your big toe, lift your heel as high as you can without losing contact with the quarter. ■

Dr. Stacy Irvine is a chiropractor, personal trainer, and co-founder of Totum Life Science, a boutique fitness club and sports rehabilitation facility with four locations in Toronto. Catherine Roscoe Barr, BSc. Neuroscience, is a Vancouver-based wellness coach, personal trainer, fitness instructor, freelance writer, and founder of The Life Delicious.

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