



# PHYSIO

Warning: This is a gentle strength and balance program. If you have an injury, history of injury, pain or any health condition, always check with your doctor before commencing. Exercise at your own risk and if you experience pain stop immediately.

## Ankle strength and stability

I think all of us should work on ankle strength! It is so common that we stop doing the exercises once pain has resolved, but I hope I can inspire to keep going with this useful program that I have put together, as it really does make the difference in preventing injury and to get us back to full function for both sports and life. Ankle stability and strength is important for everyone, just as much for runners as for other athletes, and for those who don't exercise regularly. If we have good strength and stability of the ankle, we are less likely to roll our ankles with something simple like stepping on uneven ground or down a kerb. As we get older, it is really important to have that stability, to prevent a fall and more serious injuries.

For athletes and anyone else who has had an ankle sprain, the rehab of the ankle is essential. If we don't follow it through, we are at high risk of long term lack of stability in that ankle and prone to re-injury. For those who have not had an ankle injury, these exercises are great as a preventative program, as most of us could improve our ankle strength and therefore hopefully avoid future injury. If you have had a recent or past ankle injury and still have pain, it is important that you get your injury checked with your physio before you start a program, as they will decide at what level you should start. The advanced exercises (hopping) should not be completed until the late stages of rehab, when you are completely pain-free and have worked on the basic strength and balance first.

## Strength

### Calf raises

Start with double leg calf raises, go as high as you can control, which may be half range, then build from there. The important thing is to really use your calf muscles and to go slow, squeeze your calves through the movement, and hold for 10 seconds at the top, then lower slowly.

**Start with 3 sets of 10 repetitions, with 10 second holds. Build to 12-15 repetitions.** Increase range as you improve. Progress to single leg calf raises, starting out holding the wall gently for balance if you need. Focus on really using your calf and go slow! You want your knee unlocked (a tiny knee bend).

**Build up to 3 sets of 10 with 5 second hold at the top.**



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**SSTM**<sup>TM</sup>  
Squeeze | Stretch | Trigger | Move

*Everyday!*



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## Isometric inversion and eversion

Strengthening the muscles on the inside and outside of the ankle is crucial to prevent ankle injuries and after we have had one. Isometric exercises means squeezing a muscle without moving it through range. For inversion, sit with a ball (not too soft so you squash it) between your feet, and push inwards to activate the muscles on the inside of your shin. Hold 20 seconds. For eversion, put the ball to a wall and place one foot against it, push in to the ball and hold, activating the muscles on the outside of the shin. Hold 20 seconds. **10 repetitions of 20 second holds are a great start.**



## Balance

Start doing these exercises on the floor, it can be challenging enough! When you have mastered that, it is time for a soft surface. You can use a folded exercise mat, a half dome fit ball or a wobble board if you have access to one.

## Single leg stance

When you first start you may need to hold a wall very lightly, that's ok! Pick a spot in the room to focus your vision on! Keep a soft knee with a tiny bend. **Aim for 10 sets of 30 seconds.**



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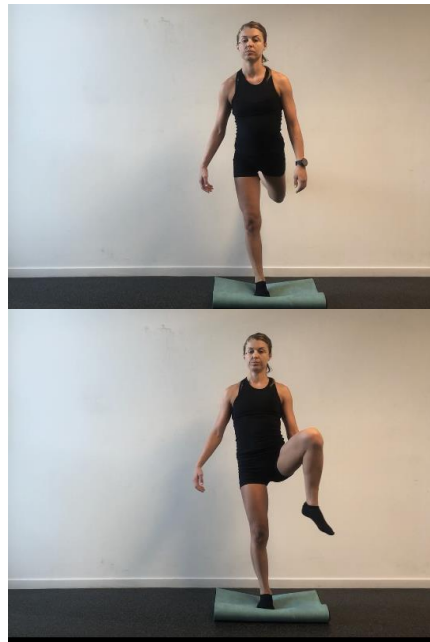
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## Single leg standing with opposite leg movements

When you can do 30 seconds single leg standing without holding on, progress to moving the other leg in the air: in front, behind, up and to the side.

**Aim for 20 leg movements (forward, back, up, side and repeat), then swap sides.**



## Arabesque

This exercise is not only good for ankle stability, but for knee control, glute and core strength as well! Stand on one leg with knee slightly bent. Slowly lean forward to extend opposite leg and arm in the air, without dropping your hip to the side. Draw your deep core gently in towards your spine and look ahead.

**Start with 5 sets of 10 second holds on each side.**



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## Dynamic balance (advanced)

### Hops to soft surface

Use a folded exercise mat. Stand about 20 cm from the mat with knees softly bent, hop with both feet onto the mat, focusing on a controlled landing with bent knees. Then hop backwards off the mat to land where you started. Re-set and hop onto the mat again. **Start with 3 sets of 10 hops.**



### Sideways hops

Stand on an exercise mat on one leg, hop sideways to land on the other side of the mat. Control the landing by landing on a soft slightly bent knee. Then hop back to the other side. If the distance is too far, make it as small as you need to be able to land controlled without losing balance. Go slow! Aim to land on the same spot with each hop. **3 sets of 10 hops on each leg is a good start**, remember it has to be pain-free!



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