

BETTER BALANCE WORKOUT

5 balance exercises to prevent ankle injuries

As an athlete, you are prone to injuries. Any sport that involves running, jumping, moving from side to side, pushing, pulling and other physical movement can cause injuries, especially to the ankle, one of the parts of the body that bears all our weight. Ankle injuries are common because while it's not a controlled environment the bones in our ankle can only take on so much weight and movement.



1. *Inversion ankle sprain:* The most common ankle injury, when your foot rolls inwards. The injury is done on the lateral (outer) side of the ankle.



2. *Eversion ankle sprain:* Less common than inversion ankle sprain; when your foot rolls outwards. The injury is done on the medial (inner) side on the ankle.

3. *High ankle sprain:* The least common ankle sprain. It's a rotation injury, when the lower limb is twisted inwards at the same time the foot is twisted outwards. The injury is on the anterior tibiofibular ligament, the lower ligament attaching the tibia and the fibular bone.



When any of these injury happens, initial recommended treatment is ice application. From there, you can seek help from a health care professional like an Athletic Therapist. The further treatment you receive (depending on the severity of the injury) like heat pack, ultrasound, soft tissue massage, beginner strengthening exercises, range of motion exercises and flexibility exercise programs, the better. When you have improved and very close to being at least 80 percent better, you can then start this progressive balance exercises to improve your ankle stability.

You may not be aware of this but when you injure your ankle the first thing that is in jeopardy is your gait and balance. Do you remember limping after you have rolled your ankle? There goes your balance, it's way off. Your body will be compensating, and affecting other parts of your muscle. To avoid this, you need to take proper rehabilitation to prevent further injuries.

Most people especially athletes do not know that balance is an important aspect of rehabilitation. Often I see people in the gym just focusing on lifting weights and forgetting to perform any balance workout. The most important aspect of ankle rehab from the get-go is working on your proprioception. That means your body's awareness in space. You need to train your body balance exercises to work on body awareness.

1. 747 or one-leg balance. At this stage of your rehab, you are able to stand on one leg without pain. Complete this 3 sets of 30-second exercise hold progressing to one-minute hold.

2. Using an unstable surface, the Rocker. The rocker focus is the forward and back movement of the ankle and side to side. Balance with double leg avoiding to hit the floor while balancing. Complete this exercise 3 sets of 30-second hold progressing to one-minute hold.

3. By the time you're standing on one leg on the floor and balancing on a rocker becomes easy, the next progressive balance exercise is SQUATTING on BOSU ball dome down. This is

much more wobbly, a step up to a challenging unstable surface and also strengthening the lower body. Complete this 3 sets of 10 repetition exercise. *Please be careful getting on and off the bosu ball. I suggest to be close to the wall if you're trying this exercise for the first time.

4. All double legs are getting easier, now do Single Leg Balance on a BOSU dome up. This one is very challenging. Complete 3 sets of 30-second hold exercise.

5. One of the advance balance exercise: Single leg semi-squats on BOSU ball dome down. Complete the 3 sets of 10 repetition exercise.

With the single leg exercises, be

sure to work on the other leg as well. You do not need to focus on the injured ankle only but perform the balance workout with the uninjured as well to get the full benefit of ankle injury prevention.

These five balance exercises are not only meant to improve your ankle stability and strength but your knee joint and hip joint stability as well. You do not need to wait to be injured to perform these exercises. I hope that you apply this technique to add to your regular exercise regimen as it will help prevent future injuries. Balance exercises should be taken more seriously by active individuals. It is as important as strengthening and flexibility exercises.

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