

FEET STRENGTHENING EXERCISES :
(TOE-TALLY AWESOME CHALLENGES)

THE MONOPOLY GAME:

Put 10 small objects on the floor--like marbles or Monopoly pieces--and place a small cup nearby. Using your toes, pick up the pieces one at a time and put them in the cup. Do two sets of 10 with each foot. Compete with your spouse or kids to see who can do 10 in the fastest time.



SINGLE LEG STANCE:

- Stand up with your feet hip width apart.
- Keep your arms out to your sides for balance.
- Lift your left leg a few inches off the floor and hold for 30-60 seconds.
- Engage your hip muscles to create a long, neutral line up your body. If this is confusing - try letting your hip relax out to the side and then tighten and contract it to align it under your shoulders - this is also another great exercise called hip huggers.
- Repeat 2-4 times on each side. You will feel all the muscles in your foot, ankle, and hip fatiguing in seconds!
- When this becomes easy, progress to performing barefoot. When that gets easy stand barefoot on a towel, pillow, or pad to further challenge the muscles and balance. If you get to SuperStar status, close your eyes (very hard).

TOE LIFTS:

- Stand barefoot with your feet shoulder width apart. Stand in tall neutral position, toes facing forward and look down at your toes. Balance your weight across the ball of your foot and heel.
- Lift all ten toes up and then slowly lower one toe at a time front pinky to big toe. If this is a challenge, sit and use your fingers to assist until you gain the dexterity.
- Repeat 10-15 times per foot once and progress in time to 2-3 sets of 15.
- When this becomes easy, progress to lifting each toe up and then down one at a time.

HEEL AND TOE RAISE:

- Stand barefoot with your feet hip width apart and your weight evenly distributed over feet.
- Raise up **on** the balls (gripping with toes) of your feet and hold for 1-2 seconds and lower.
- **Lift** your toes as you transfer your weight to your heels and hold for 1-2 seconds and lower.
- Repeat heel and toe raises for 30 seconds.
- Begin with one set and as your feet grow stronger increase to 2-3 sets at 45-60 seconds.
- When that becomes easy, brag about it to your family and friends and up the ante by performing this exercise on a stability pad, folded towel, or pillow.

BENT-KNEE WALL STRETCH:

Most people often forget to stretch the soleus--a muscle deep in the calf that attaches to the Achilles. Only stretching with a straight leg, targets gastrocnemius, which is just half the battle. Here's how to target the soleus: Stand with your palms against a wall, one leg forward, one leg back. Lower into a "seated" position with legs bent. Lean into the wall until you feel the stretch in your lower leg. Hold 30 to 45 seconds then switch legs.

