

Tips To Jump Safer And Higher

Many injuries are associated with repeated jumping—patellar tendonitis, Achilles tendonitis, and ankle sprains to name just a few. To limit the potential for injury when performing activities that require repeated jumping, it is important to do exercises that focus specifically on jumping. Also, you will see an improvement in performance if you do a little training. Follow the tips below to jump safer and higher.

1. Improve your overall strength - Sure, jumping requires explosive strength, but the fact is that the stronger your legs are the more force you can produce, which will lead to higher leaping ability. Also, stronger muscles can withstand more abuse, making your potential for injury lower.

- Start with the squat – The barbell back squat is the gold standard for leg strengthening exercises so if you are going to focus on leg strength start here. Then add things like split squats, deadlifts, and lunges to the program.

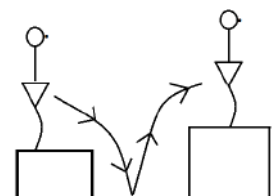


2. Focus on mechanics – It's very important to jump with good mechanics. Have a friend video record you jumping and then analyze your mechanics (preferably in slow motion). Look for problems like your knees diving inwards on the takeoff or landing. Make sure you jump and land using both legs equally and avoid twisting your torso or side-to-side differences. If faults exist, practice jumping while concentrating on preventing them. Continue videoing and analyzing your performance. Be picky—the better your technique, the safer and greater your performance will be.



3. Perform jumping exercises

- Start with tuck jumps - Jump up and pull your knees into your chest. When you can do 3 sets of 10 repetitions easily, it's time to move on.
- Box jumps - Jump off the ground and land on a wooden box or platform about 16 inches high. When you can do 3 sets of 10 repetitions easily, jump to a higher box. You can keep increasing the height of the box—there is no limit. Once you are proficient at this, move on again.
- Depth jumps - Stand on a small box. Jump off the box, land on both feet and immediately jump onto another box of equal or greater height. Repeat this 5-10 times. When this is easy, increase the height of both the box you jump off of and the box you jump on to.



Ankle Strengthening/Balance Training Exercises

You can have good (or bad) balance while standing still, walking straight, or with more complicated movements. These exercises are meant to work on each type of balance. Furthermore, to maintain balance you use input from the joint receptors in your body, from your eyes and from your inner ear. Any exercise can be made harder by closing your eyes, moving your head from side to side or up and down, or standing on a less stable surface (such as a cushion or pillow). You could even do more than one if you're really looking for a challenge! If you are unsure of your balance and are worried about falling, always perform these in front of a counter or heavy table so you can catch your balance with your hands if you need to.

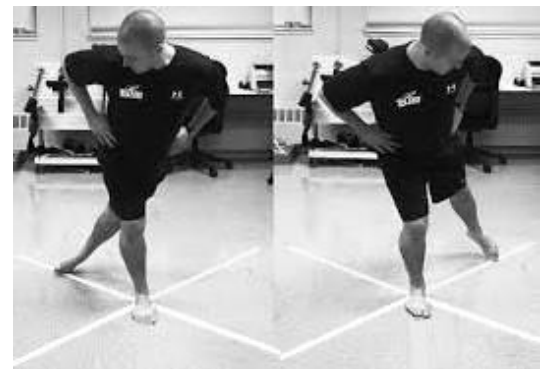
1. **Stand on one leg.** Try to maintain your balance for 30 seconds. If you can't, practice for 2 minutes each day until you can. Make sure you can also do it on the opposite leg. Once you can, you can challenge yourself further by closing your eyes, moving your head, or standing on a less stable surface.



2. **Walk heel to toe for 5-10 feet without losing your balance.** If you can, challenge yourself with your eyes closed and/or with head movements.



3. Lay down two six-foot long pieces of tape in the form of an "X." Stand on one foot in the middle of the "X." **While bending the knee you are standing on, stretch your free leg behind your body to the opposite side and lightly touch your toe to the ground along the "X" and then return to the starting position without losing your balance.** Repeat to the other side. Perform multiple times. Again, if this gets easy, experiment with eyes closed, head movements and standing on an unstable surface.



Your sense of position in space and ability to make compensations will improve so you can better avoid rolling your ankle/losing your balance or know when to unweight the leg and fall down (in the case of sports) to avoid serious ankle injury.