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Repeated Rollover Accidents

Taming Recurrent Ankle Sprains with Proper Training



later during a friendly game of volleyball. Last year, he got out of his truck and rolled over the outside of his ankle so severely that he was unable to walk for three days. Bernie recently started back on a program of exercise and rolled his ankle performing box jumps. Six weeks later, Bernie made his way to our physical therapy clinic for some help.

The story of Bernie's recurrent inversion ankle sprain is a common one. If you have an ankle sprain, the statistics show you are likely to have another. Suffer two sprains and it is a very good bet you are on the way to a third rollover without some type of rehab intervention. The good news is the intervention for recurrent inversion ankle sprains is easy to implement and can be incorporated into any fitness program.

Neuromuscular feedback loops create the automatic reactions that hold us upright. Inversion ankle sprains damage this system and inhibit control of deceleration at the ankle. Eleven tendons cross the ankle joint and every tendon is loaded with nerve cells that sense changes in surface angles, foot position, and the speed of movement. The

Bernie suffered his first ankle sprain in his junior year of high school basketball. The second sprain happened four years

bottom of the foot is densely packed with sensory nerves that send information about the force of impact and the stability of the ground. A proper training program reboots the neural signals that control deceleration at the ankle.

Limited control of deceleration can be caused by problems at the foot, ankle, knee, hip, or core. For your ankle to function properly, it needs the assistance of more than just the foot and ankle muscles. Inversion ankle sprains occur when the patient lands on the ball of the foot and is unable to efficiently control deceleration of the movement. Instead of controlling descent of the foot back to flat on the ground, the patient rolls over the outside of the ankle.

Following are the three basic drills that I suggest for people with recurrent inversion ankle sprains. You should be pain-free before beginning these drills. Pay attention to how your body feels during the exercises and strive to become more graceful during the execution of the drills. Please stop performing the foot in the air theraband ankle exercise activities. It is difficult to develop better neuromuscular control if you confuse your neural system with an improper stimulus. The computer adage is "garbage in – garbage out."

You need to ditch the shoes and perform all of these exercises barefoot or in your stocking feet. If your gym requires shoes, then wear a pair of minimalist shoes. Thick sole running shoes with anti-movement support inhibit the biofeedback necessary for better ankle and foot function. The exercises are listed in order of difficulty. Start with the short foot drill and work your way up.

(continued on next page)

Happier Landings

Three Simple Anti-Inversion Exercises

Short Foot Drill



The muscles on the bottom of the foot are called the foot intrinsics. The foot intrinsics function in a manner similar to the core muscles of the torso. Their job is to brace the foot so it can transfer forces through a stabilized series of boney arches. Weak or slow to respond foot intrinsic muscles impede the foot's capacity to decelerate forces. The short foot drill will improve foot intrinsic muscle performance.

To perform the short foot drill on the right foot, place the right foot flat on the ground and place the left foot back. Bend the right knee about 20 degrees and lift the left heel off the ground so more weight is on your right foot. Lift and spread the toes of the right foot. Lower the toes back to the ground and grip the floor with the big toe. Contract the muscles on the bottom of the foot. You should feel a lifting of the foot arches. Tighten the muscles of the right leg from the calf to the hip and lift the pelvic floor. Hold this tension in the foot and leg for ten seconds and then release. Perform five repetitions.

Balance Beam Lateral Walk



Stability in the frontal plane of motion (side to side) is often compromised in clients with a history of inversion ankle sprains. They are unable to efficiently control forces when they move laterally. Unfortunately, most fitness activities take place in the sagittal plane (forward and backward) and the frontal plane rarely receives any

attention. Balance beam lateral walks will improve frontal plane stability.

You need a four to five inch wide balance beam. You can also use an eight foot Trex deck plank or an exercise beam made by Perform Better. Since you are not going to be using any shoes make sure the beam you use will not produce splinters. Stand sideways with the heels off the beam and the load across the front of the foot. Keep the heels up and walk sideways on the beam. Keep the torso tall and do not look down. Perform ten steps each direction. Build up to three sets of fifteen repetitions.

Cross Over Lunge



You need a three dimensional mastery of movement to control ankle deceleration and prevent further inversion sprains. Movement happens with the foot on the ground and motion over the foot. This is the coordination drill that trains all members of the lower extremity kinetic chain to work together.

To perform the cross over lunge you need some open space. These are the directions for performance of the cross over lunge on the right leg. Perform the short foot drill with the right foot and lift the heel off the ground. Keep a solid contraction in the foot intrinsic muscles and grip the ground with the toes. Step the left foot out to the side and pause. Step the left foot across the front of the right leg and pause. Step the left foot back out to the side and pause. Step the left foot behind the right leg and pause. That is one cycle of the cross over lunge. Perform five to ten cycles.

-Michael O'Hara, P.T., OCS, CSCS

Video demonstration of these drills can be seen on our youtube channel at:
<https://youtu.be/9yz44gz8Rtw>

Member Spotlight: Gay Adams

Training for an Unintended Purpose



“Our health always seems much more valuable after we lose it.” ~unknown

Life is unpredictable. We know this is true, but most of us move through it taking our health for granted. We live, work, and play, and while we appreciate the ability to do so, it’s important to ask ourselves if we’re prepared for the day the tables are turned.

Fenton Fitness members, Craig and Gay Adams, were on vacation in Hawaii last February when Craig experienced flu-like symptoms that went from bad to worse. Diagnosed with pneumonia shortly thereafter, and safely home in Michigan, Craig’s condition deteriorated. Kidney complications added to his malaise and he was hospitalized for an extended period of time. He was moved to Well-Bridge of Fenton and had round the clock care before Gay was able to bring him home in July.

“I didn’t know how I’d find the time to continue working out but knew I had to in order to maintain my strength. I am so grateful I stuck with the gym throughout this process with Craig. If I hadn’t been encouraged over and over by each trainer and all the staff, along with the very supportive family of friends I have made here, this whole process would have been overwhelming.”

Craig and Gay joined Fenton Fitness in 2009.

They had always been active, but their workouts had become stale and they needed to refocus their mindset.

“We were instantly attracted to the amenities and the caring, friendly staff. The gym is clean and well lit, the members are fun to be around, and the trainers are accessible, answering all my questions about equipment and form. The gym has transitioned into a training facility over the years and I love the changes. I love the Team Training classes, especially M3B and Total Body Training. Regular assessments with Jeff help keep me on track and the occasional Semi-Private session pushes me to do more than I think I can.”

It wasn’t until Gay’s physical limits were tested that she truly understood the meaning of Functional Fitness. She dreaded pushing the sled, but now when she pushes her husband in his wheel chair, she is amazed that she can.

“It really works! My strength has improved so much during my time at Fenton Fitness. Without all the pushing, pulling, and lifting, I would not be able to meet the physical demands of caring for Craig. My core is stronger. My balance is better. I’m eating healthier, and I’m much more confident.”

And confidence goes a long way when our physical and mental strength is challenged.

“Coming here has made me feel that I am important. Now that I have been forced to draw on the strength gained in the gym, I feel confident. I leave here thinking *I can do this. This is why I do this.*”

Gay is motivated to continue her program of exercise 2-3 days a week. She will do it for Craig and welcomes the support of the members and staff.

“I need to be as fit as possible to help Craig through this and with the support of Fenton Fitness I never feel alone.”

*-Amy Warner, Director of Sales and Marketing
amy@fentonfitness.com*

Suitcase Carry vs. Sidebends

A friend of mine works as personal trainer and likes to say, "There are no bad exercises, just bad applications." I respectfully disagree. The study of anatomy, biomechanics, industrial ergonomics, and an understanding of how injuries occur, give us the ability to make good decisions in regards to exercise selection. While it is nice to remain forever non-judgmental, it is naïve to ignore the ill effects of poor exercise selection. Bad exercise decisions often regress fitness clients from the gym into the medical system. I have some alternatives to many of the more common poor choices.

Weighted Sidebends

This exercise is often witnessed in commercial gyms. During physical therapy interviews with lower back pain patients, they frequently report a history of performing this exercise. The participant holds a weight in one hand and then side bends. The side bend exercise is often performed for a high number of repetitions, and I am told it is done to selectively remove fat off the side of the abdomen and strengthen the obliques. Unfortunately, spot fat reduction is a myth and your oblique muscles never work this way. Sidebend exercises are far more likely to produce a mechanical irritation of the spine and a visit to the physical therapy clinic. A better choice is the suitcase carry.

Suitcase Carry

The internal and external oblique muscles never function in isolation. They are members of a team of muscles that hold us upright, transfer forces from the legs to the arms, and manage compression. Fitness clients need to develop better isometric strength-endurance in the oblique muscles. They need to be able to fire the core muscles for a sustained period of

time under tension. The lumbar spine does not like extra movement while under a compressive force. It needs to be held stable and secure. You develop all of these with the suitcase carry.

Carry over to real life should be the primary goal of any fitness program.

Your work in the gym should make you a more capable human movement machine. The ability to carry an object is an essential skill we all need to maintain. You get that by practicing the suitcase carry.



Using a strong grip, hold a kettlebell, dumbbell, or weight plate with the right hand. Keep the chest proud, shoulders back, and torso tight while you walk. Only use a weight that permits you to maintain proper posture. Do not lean forward or tilt side to side. Keep the torso tall and your gait pattern consistent. Twenty yards is a good starting distance. Rest and switch to the left side and repeat. Perform two twenty yard walks on each side.

-Michael S. O'Hara, P.T., OCS, CSCS

Video of suitcase carries can be viewed on our
youtube channel at:
<https://youtu.be/vhNBEusqARs>

Additional Resources

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