

Preparing For The Downhill



Imagine: Ski season is coming to an end, and the sun is shining on a beautiful spring day. The wait of winter is over, and you are ready to step out and hit one of the numerous scenic hiking trails that the Northwest has to offer.

Hiking season will quickly be upon us, so why not start off on the right foot (*pun intended*) with the proper preparation to prevent injury and enable you to climb the tallest peaks and perform to your full potential?

Believe it or not, the majority of injuries that occur during hikes happen on the downhill portion of the trek. This is largely due to increased forces on the joints, particularly the knees and surrounding tissues, as they work to slow your descent in a controlled manner. Ankle injuries are also common, as hiking downhill on uneven surfaces demands a high level of balance. Lacking the adequate strength, flexibility, and stability necessary for this activity can greatly increase risk for injury.

What can you do to help prevent this? The photos here outline a progressive exercise program that works to build strength and stability of the major muscle groups that are used for hiking downhill: the quadriceps and gluts. Ankle stability and balance are also components of this program, as these are valuable elements of injury prevention. Following this exercise progression and performing it on a regular basis reduces risk of injury by stabilizing the joints of the lower extremity and taking pressure off the knees.

Other Helpful Tips for Preparing for Your Next Hiking Adventure:

- *Dynamic stretching warm-up and cool down.*
- *Trekking poles: Great for providing extra support, stability, and peace of mind!*
- *Supportive foot wear that provides adequate arch and ankle support.*

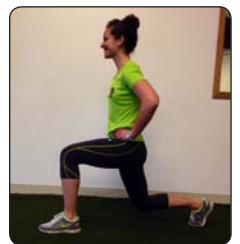
Enjoy this hiking season, and feel free to talk to your local physical therapist for any additional tips, questions, or concerns you may have to make your hiking experience the best it can be. You can find your local Therapeutic Associates Physical Therapist at: www.therapeuticassociates.com/Locations

SEE YOU ON THE TRAIL!

By: Anna Friedman PT, DPT, Physical Therapist :: TAI Canyon Park Physical Therapy

LUNGE

In wide stride, legs shoulder width apart, head up, back straight, bend both legs simultaneously until forward thigh is parallel to the floor. Maintain weight on heel of front leg. Do all repetitions on one side. Repeat on other side.



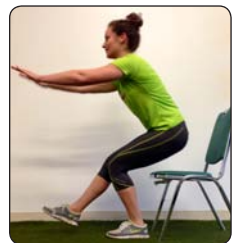
STEP DOWN LUNGE

Follow same setup as lunge, but place rear foot on step. Bend both legs simultaneously until front thigh is parallel to the floor. Do all repetitions on one side. Repeat on other side.



SINGLE-LEG SQUAT

Stand on one foot. Reach forward for balance and do a mini squat. Keep knees in line with second toe and weight on heel. Knees do not go past toes.



WHEN TO PROGRESS:

Perform each exercise 10 repetitions, 2-3 times per day, 2-3 times per week. Increase the repetitions if you are able to perform 15-20 repetitions easily without fatigue, and use correct form. This usually takes around 3 weeks for each exercise, depending on individual physical fitness level.

