

THE

IRON

STRENGTH

WORKOUT FOR RUNNERS

By Jordan D. Metz, MD

**RUNNER'S
WORLD®**

Runners love running. They don't like getting hurt. That's why it's so important for every runner to strength train.

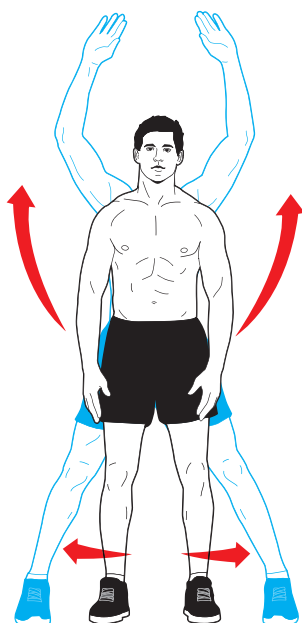
Strong, balanced muscles won't only help prevent injury, they will also boost your performance, making it easier to run faster and longer. Luckily, you don't need a gym or much equipment (just a pair of dumbbells) to work your key running muscles. Take this on-the-go, mobile-friendly version of the IronStrength Workout with you, and you can build a strong, healthy body that will carry you for miles and miles.

DYNAMIC WARMUP

This warmup is simple. Do 30 seconds of jumping jacks, 30 seconds of squats, and 30 seconds each of walking high knees and walking high kicks to get your body ready for the “heavy lifting.”

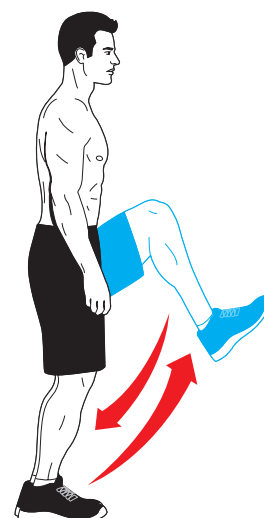
JUMPING JACKS

Stand with your feet together and your hands at your sides. Simultaneously raise your arms above your head and jump up just enough to spread your feet out wide. Without pause, quickly reverse the movement and repeat.



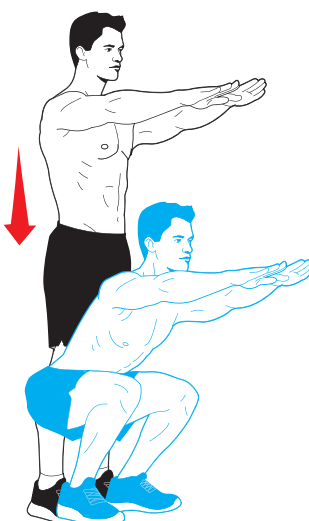
WALKING HIGH KNEES

Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Without changing your posture, raise your right knee as high as you can and step forward. Repeat with your left leg. Continue to alternate back and forth.



SQUATS

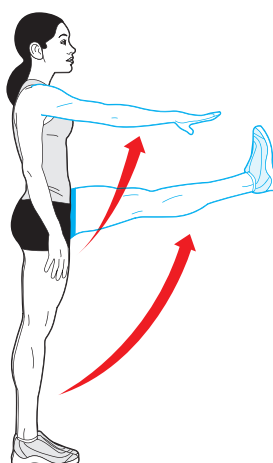
Stand with your feet about hip-width apart. With your arms straight out in front of you, slowly lower down as if you are going to sit; push your butt back and engage your core to keep your upper body upright. Lower your body until your leg forms a 90-degree angle, and then push back up. Repeat.



WALKING HIGH KICKS

Stand tall with your arms hanging at your sides. Keeping your knee straight, kick your left leg up—reaching with your right arm out to meet it—as you simultaneously take a step forward (just imagine that you're a Russian soldier).

As soon as your left foot touches the floor, repeat the movement with your right leg and left arm. Alternate back and forth.



THE IRONSTRENGTH WORKOUT

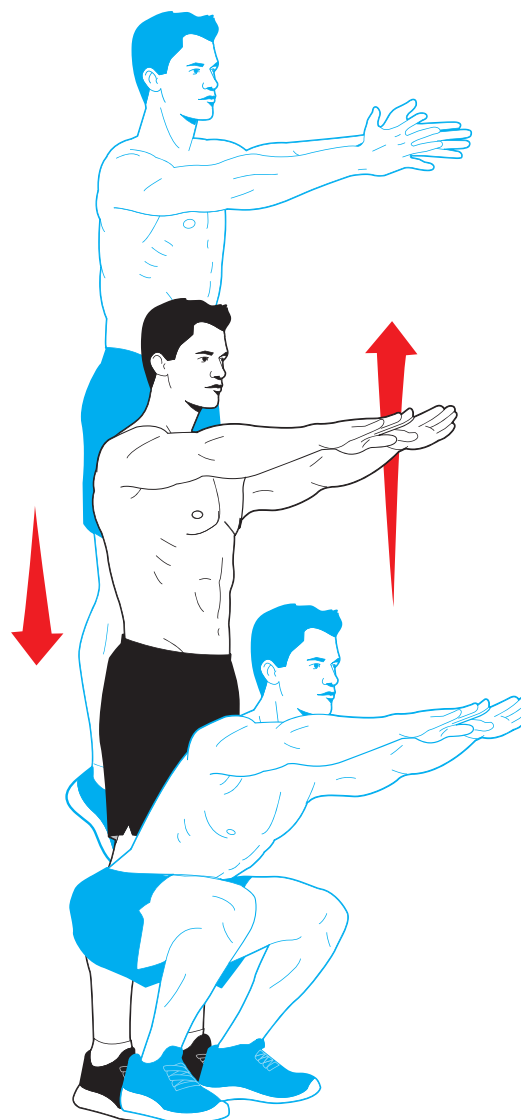
Once you have completed the dynamic warmup, you can dive into the following exercises. You should feel warm all over, maybe a little sweaty. I recommend listening to great music for the upcoming strength work—it really helps!

1. Plyometric Jump Squats

Stand with your feet spread a little wider than shoulder-width and turned out just a little bit. This helps you get low. Put your arms straight out in front of you. Now lower down until your butt is just below your knees. As you lower, push your butt back, as if you are going to sit down in a chair, and keep your torso upright. Explode up off the floor, and then come right back down into the squat. Repeat.

Points for good form: Use controlled motion, landing softly each time, and push off from your heels as you come up.

Reps: Do 6 sets of 15, with 20 seconds of rest in between. You can build up to 8 sets.

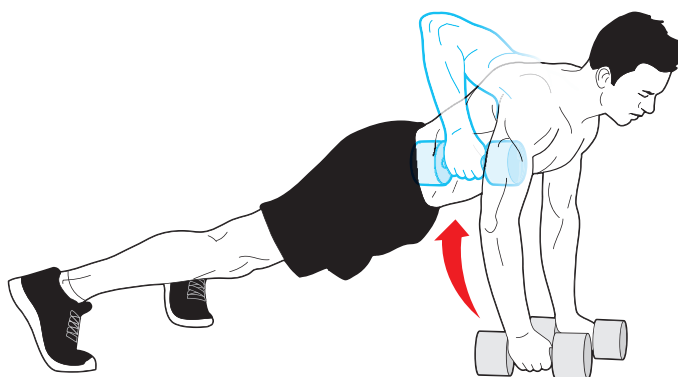


2. Superset: Rows from Plank, Pushups, Situps

A superset is a combination of exercises, and in this case three moves have been combined for your core and upper body.

ROWS FROM PLANK WITH WEIGHTS

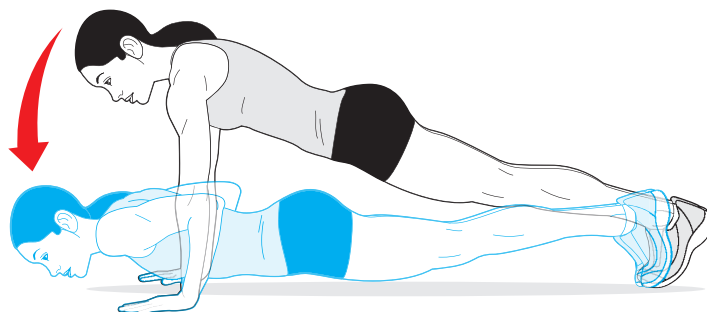
Get into a plank position with your hands resting on dumbbells. Your spine should be straight, shoulders over your hands, feet hip-width apart, and core engaged. Pull the right dumbbell up next to your chest, and then lower it down. Repeat with the left arm. You don't want to turn your whole body; you should still be basically facing the floor. Do 15 (left and right equals 1), and then move on to pushups.



PUSHUPS

Get into a plank position (spine straight and core engaged), lower your body almost all the way to the floor, pause, and push up. If your hips start to droop, switch to the modified version. Do 15, and then flip onto your back for situps.

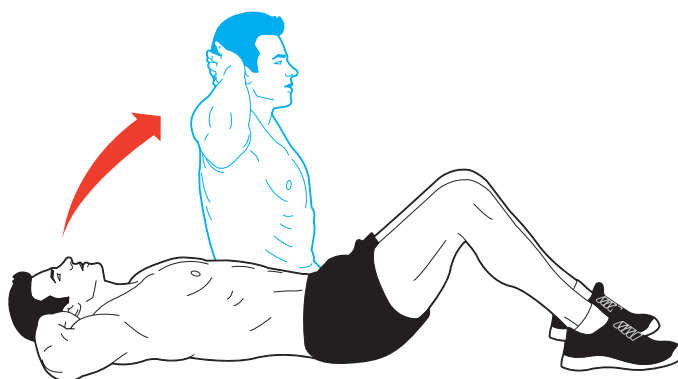
Modification: Do as many traditional pushups as you can. When you feel your butt start to sag, though, drop to your knees but keep your spine straight and your core engaged as you lower your upper body and push back up.



SITUPS

Lie down on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and hands behind your head. Come off the floor, sit straight up, and lower back down. Do 15 reps; then begin the superset again with rows from plank.

Duration of the superset: I would like you to spend 5 minutes on this superset, 6 minutes if you're advanced.



3. Superset: Plyometric Lunges and Plyometric Single-Leg Toe Touches

PLYOMETRIC LUNGES

Start with a simple isometric lunge:

From a standing position, lunge forward with your left leg and right arm, lowering your body until your back knee nearly touches the floor. Engage your core muscles to keep your torso upright and stable. Push back up and repeat with your other leg.

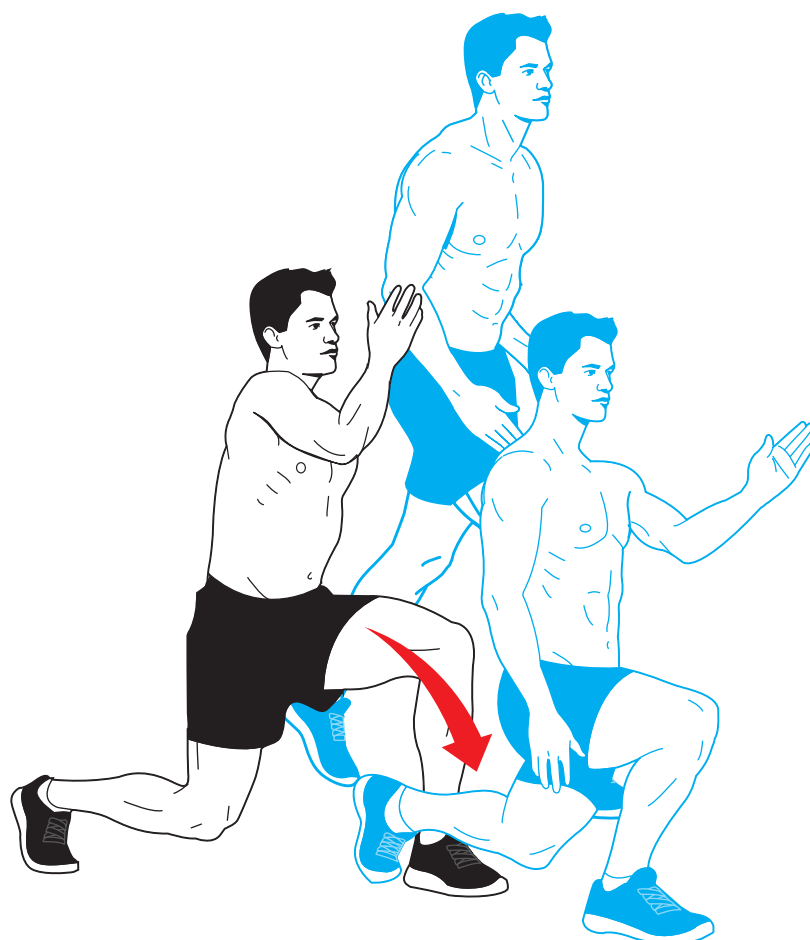
Build in plyometrics:

Perform the lunge as described above, but as you come up, really push off the floor so you can switch legs in midair. Then immediately come back down into the lunge and explode up again.

Points for good form: Accentuate the leg movement; your legs should be farther apart than they would be if you were running. Engage your core; you want very controlled motion and a stable pelvis—no flailing around. Come on, you know you're having fun now! Right?

Reps: Do 10; then move on to the plyometric single-leg squats.

Modification: Your goal should be to do plyometric lunges for the entire set. If you can do that on day one of this workout—terrific. If you can't, stick with isometric lunges and gradually work in the more advanced plyometric version as you are able.



PLYOMETRIC SINGLE-LEG TOE TOUCHES

Start with an isometric single-leg toe touch:

Stand on your left leg with your right leg out in front of you and raised off the floor. Place your arms straight out to the side at shoulder height. Bend your left leg at the knee and squat down to touch your left hand to the toe of your right foot; then come back up.

Build in plyometrics:

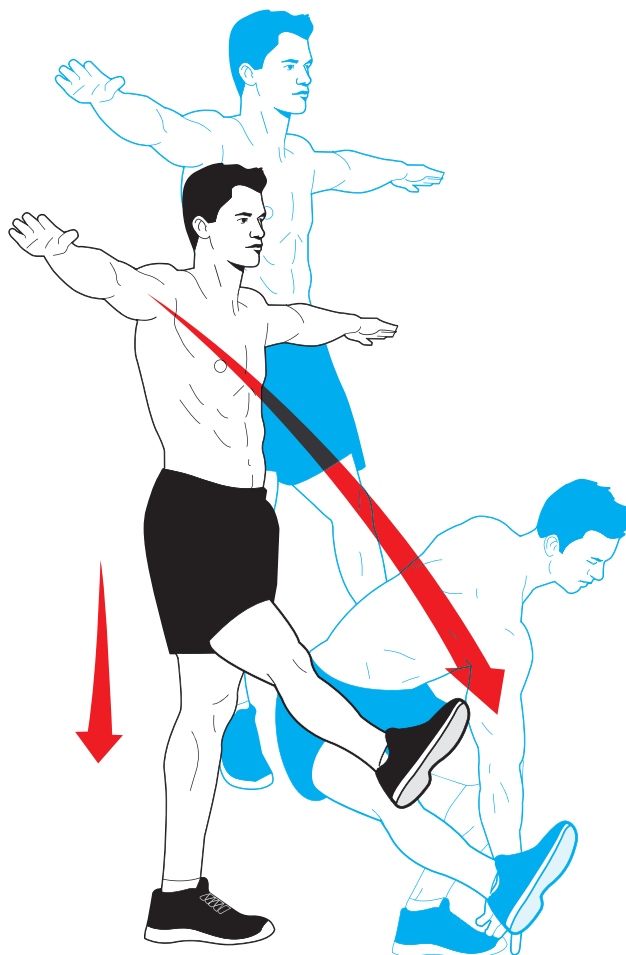
Perform the exercise as described above, adding in a hop as you come back up.

Points for good form: Engage your core to keep your torso upright and control your movement as you lower your body.

Reps: Do 10 on your right leg; then go back to the lunges. For your second superset, do 10 on your left leg.

Modification: The goal is to do plyometric single-leg toe touches throughout the entire set, but these are really challenging. Please don't get discouraged. Perform the isometric toe touch as best you can, and if you can't touch your toe, that's okay; just reach down as far as you can comfortably while maintaining good form.

Duration of the superset: Alternate between the lunges and toe touches for a total of 5 minutes, 6 minutes if you are advanced.



4. Superset: Mountain Climbers and Legs Down

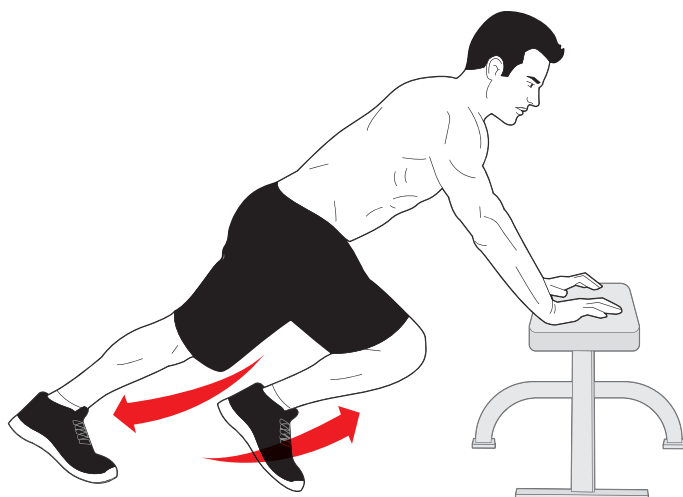
MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

Get into a modified straight-arm plank position with your butt a little higher than if you were doing planks. Bring your right leg forward as far as you can—your knee will come close to your arm—and then immediately extend it straight back and bring your left leg forward. Switch back and forth quickly from leg to leg.

Points for good form: Maintain the modified plank position throughout; don't let your butt sag or poke upward. Your upper body should be stable; all the movement happens from the hips down.

Reps: Right and left counts as 1; do 15, and then flip on your back for legs down.

Modification: You can make these easier by supporting your upper body on a bench or exercise step.



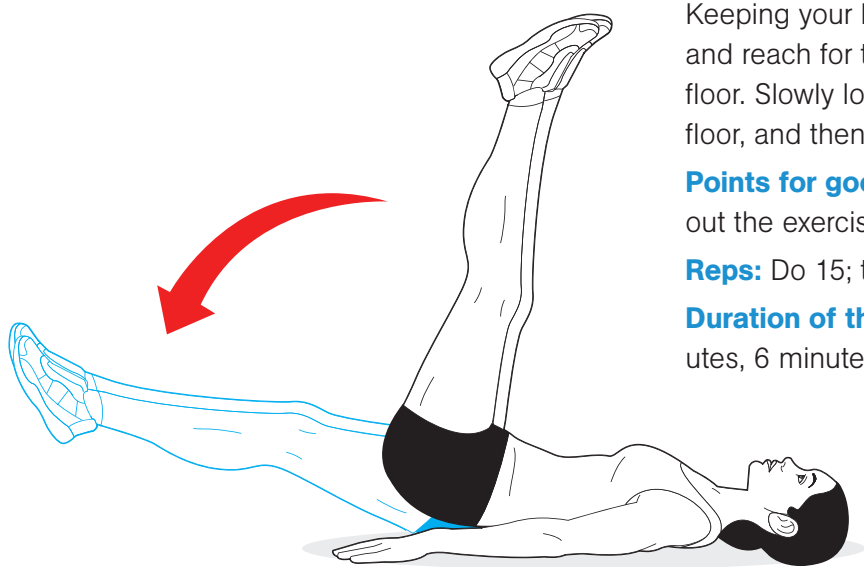
LEGS DOWN

Lie down on your back, legs straight and together. Keeping your legs straight, bring them all the way up and reach for the ceiling until your butt comes off the floor. Slowly lower your legs back down almost to the floor, and then raise them back up again.

Points for good form: Use controlled motion throughout the exercise, raising and lowering your legs slowly.

Reps: Do 15; then return to mountain climbers.

Duration of the superset: Repeat for a total of 5 minutes, 6 minutes if you are advanced.



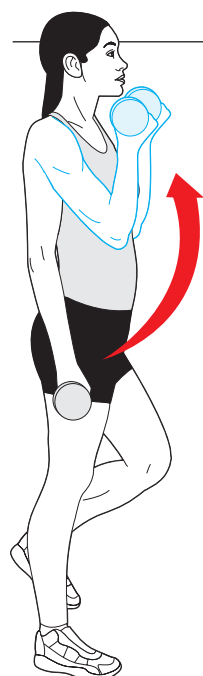
5. Superset: Overhead Push Press, Bicep Curls, Deadlift High Pulls

OVERHEAD PUSH PRESS

Standing on one leg, hold a dumbbell in each hand right above your shoulders with your palms facing in toward your ears. Push the dumbbells straight up and come right back down, using your core to keep your balance.

Reps: Do 15; up next—bicep curls.

Modification: If you have trouble balancing on one leg, try just touching your toe to the floor for a little stability.



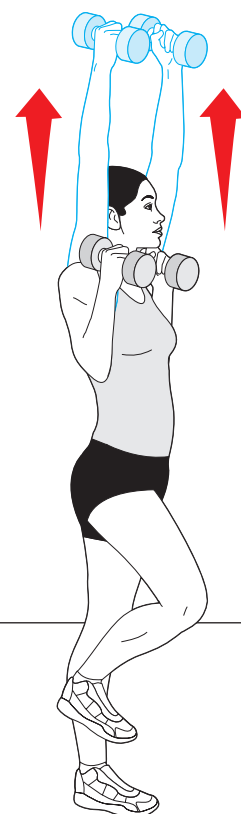
BICEP CURLS

If you stood on your left leg for the overhead push press, I want you to now balance on your right. Hold a dumbbell in each hand straight down by your legs, palms facing forward. Curl both dumbbells up toward your shoulders, and then release them back down. Repeat using a nice fluid motion.

Reps: Do 15; then start from the top of the superset again with deadlift high pulls.

Modification: If you have trouble balancing on one leg, touch the toe of your raised leg to the floor for some stability.

Duration of the superset: Continue to rotate through the three exercises for 5 minutes, 6 minutes if you're advanced.

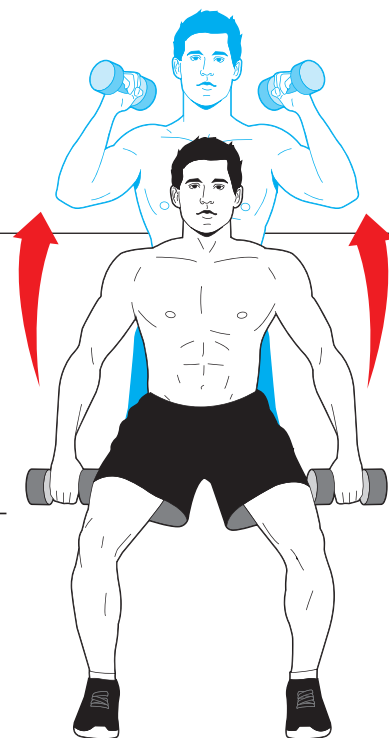


DEADLIFT HIGH PULLS

Holding a dumbbell in each hand, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Squat down about 30 degrees, sticking your butt out and keeping your back straight. Hold the dumbbells straight down by your knees with your palms facing back. Stand up and pull the dumbbells up next to your ears in a nice fluid motion, and then lower back into the squat position and repeat.

Points for good form: Maintain fluid motion as you squat down and pull up.

Reps: Do 15; then get ready for the overhead push press.



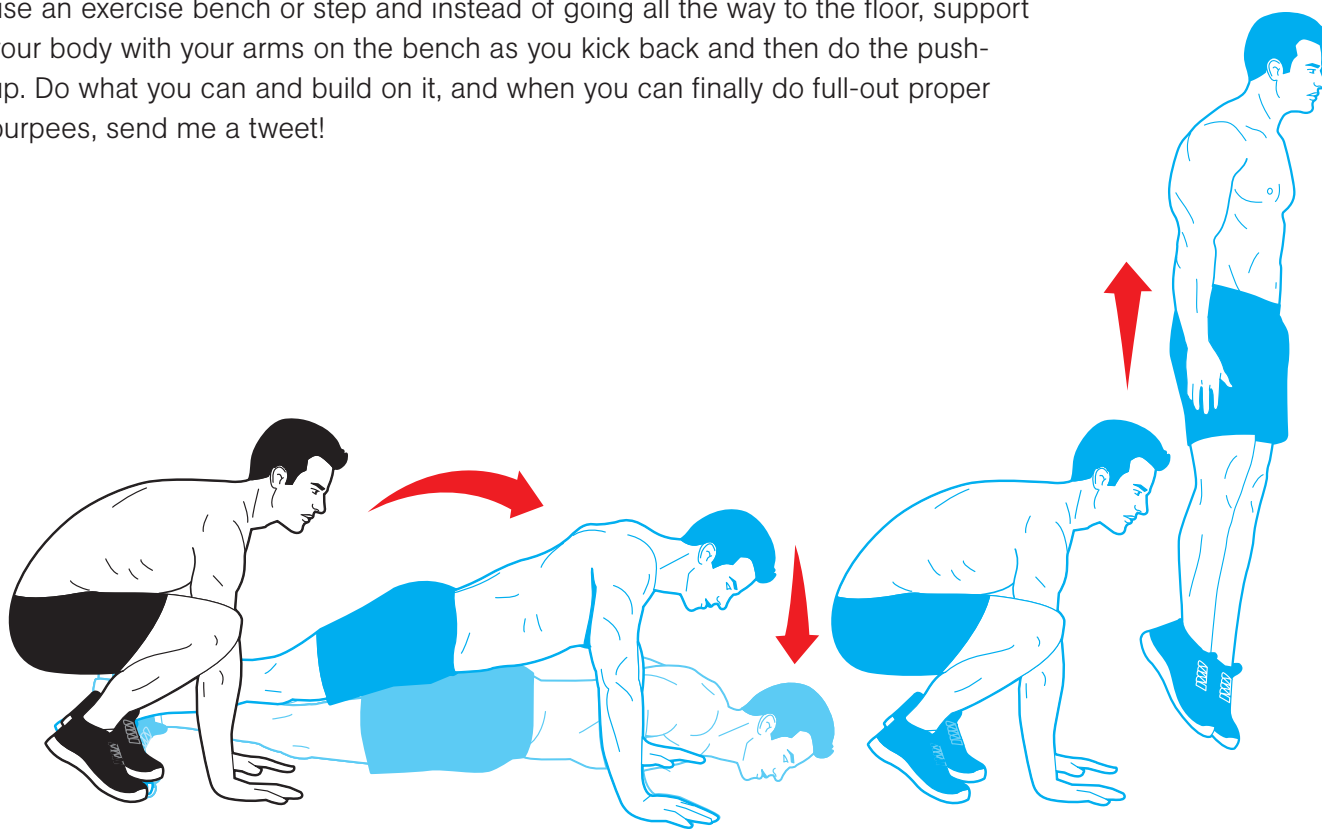
6. Burpees

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Squat all the way down, placing your hands on the floor. Supporting your weight on your hands, kick back into a plank position. Do a pushup. Pull your legs back into a squat, and then jump straight up in the air.

Points for good form: Be sure to hold your torso upright and push your butt back as you lower down into a squat. And kick into a proper plank position, straight body from heel to head; don't let your hips drop or stick up.

Reps: Do 4 or 5 sets of 10 (yes, that's 40 to 50 burpees in total), with 20 seconds of rest between sets. Once you get really good at these, I want you to do a burpee pyramid, descending from 10 sets of 10 to 9 sets of 10, then 8, 7, 6, all the way down to 1 (no kidding).

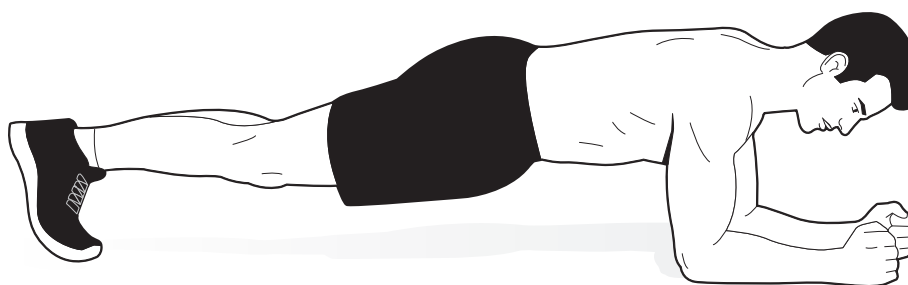
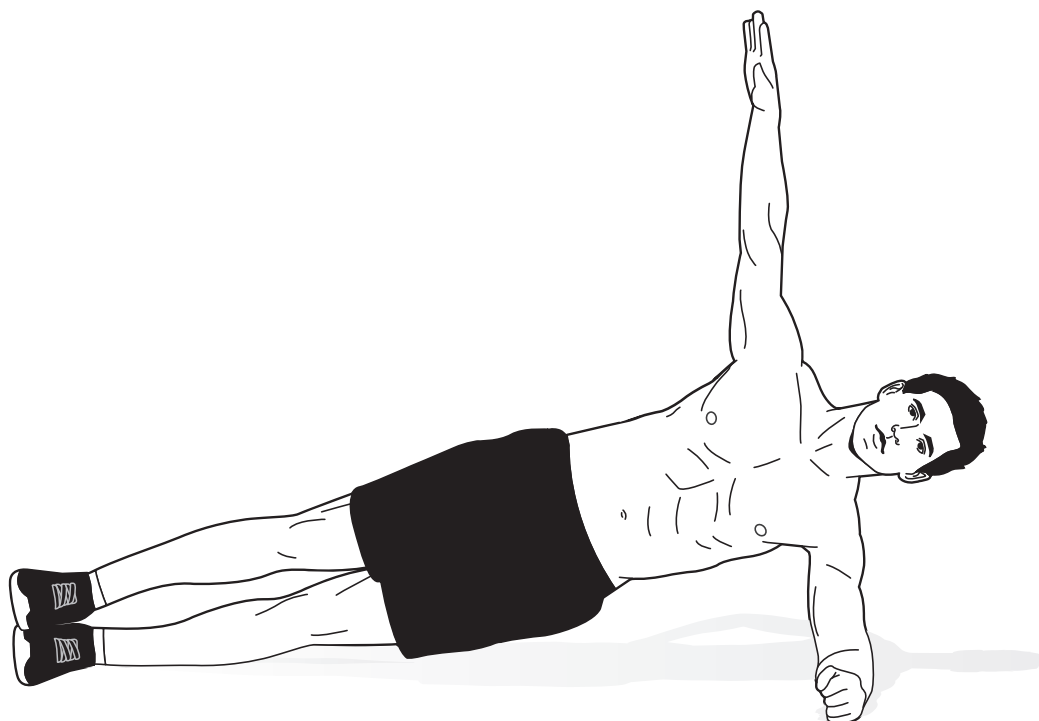
Modification: I really want you to conquer this exercise, and I know you can do it. But if you need to start out with a modified version, that's fine; there are a few different ways to change it up and make it easier. If you can't do a traditional pushup, do the pushup on your knees. If the squat-and-thrust portion is giving you trouble, use an exercise bench or step and instead of going all the way to the floor, support your body with your arms on the bench as you kick back and then do the push-up. Do what you can and build on it, and when you can finally do full-out proper burpees, send me a tweet!



7. The Finale: Planks and Stretching

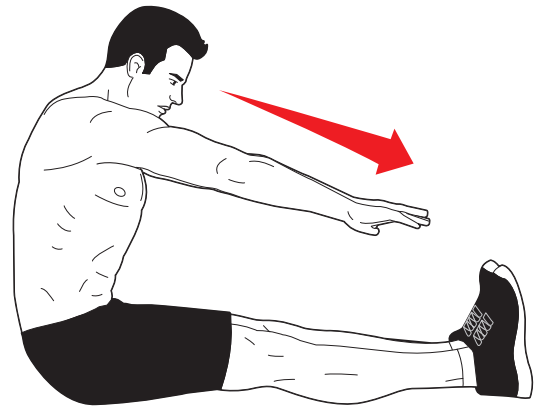
PLANKS

Start with a left forearm plank: Lie on your left side and support your body on your forearm, elbow directly under your shoulder. With your right arm pointed straight up to the ceiling, raise your hips until your body is in a straight line from your shoulders to your ankles. Hold this position for 1 minute. Turn facedown to do a center plank; support your body on both forearms, elbows directly under your shoulders, and engage your core muscles to hold your body in a firm line from head to heel. Hold steady for 1 minute. Turn to your right to finish with a right forearm plank, holding this final position for 1 minute.



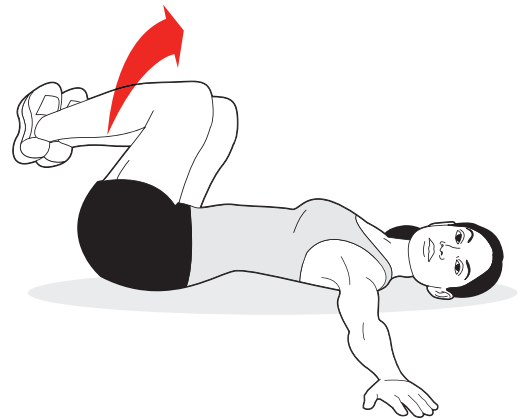
SEATED HAMSTRING STRETCHES

Sit down on the floor with your legs together and straight out in front of you. Lean forward toward your feet, stretching out your lower back and hamstrings. Don't worry about trying to touch your toes; go as far as you can comfortably and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Next, spread your legs apart a little and bend toward your right foot; hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Then bend toward the left for 10 to 15 seconds.



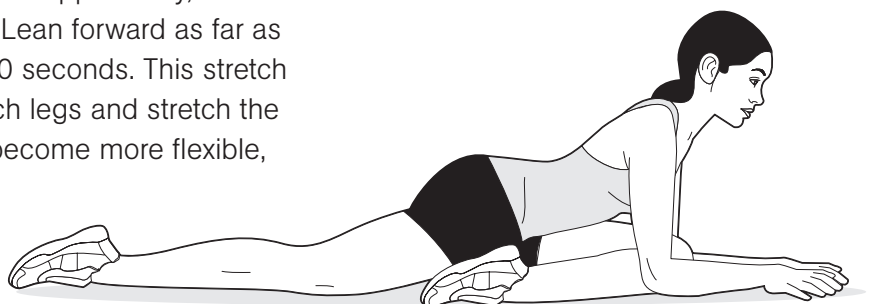
BACK STRETCH

Lie on your back with your legs together and bent. Keeping your shoulders on the floor, move both legs together over to your right as far as you can go without lifting your shoulders off the floor. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds; then twist and take your legs over to your left side, again as far as you can go without lifting your shoulders, and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. This stretches the erector spinae muscles located along your spine.



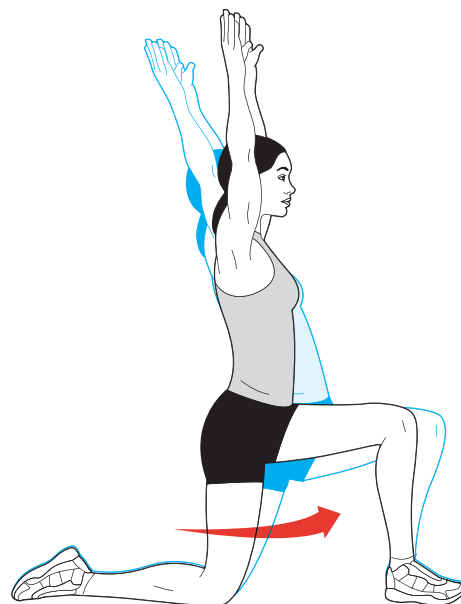
MODIFIED PIGEON POSE

Face the floor, fold one leg underneath your upper body, and stretch the other leg straight behind you. Lean forward as far as you can comfortably and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. This stretch really opens up your glute muscles. Switch legs and stretch the other side for 15 to 20 seconds. As you become more flexible, you will be able to bend farther forward.



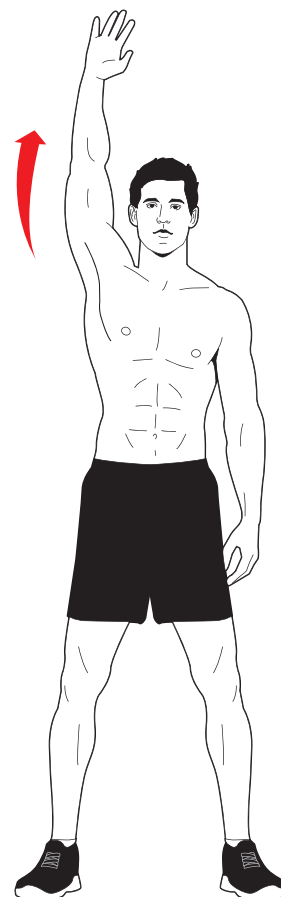
HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Your hip flexors are a group of muscles in the front of your hip that flex your hip and bring your thigh up toward your chest. You worked them hard during lunges, mountain climbers, and burpees. To stretch them, get down on the floor, bring your right leg forward a little bit in front of your knee, and extend your left leg behind you, knee resting on the floor a little bit behind your butt. Stretching your arms up over your head, arch your back as you lean into your forward knee. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, and then switch legs.



ACTIVE OBLIQUE STRETCH (AKA I'M A LITTLE TEAPOT)

Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Take your right arm and stretch it all the way up as high as you can toward the ceiling. This stretches the obliques and all the muscles along the side of your rib cage. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, and then stretch the other side.



Congratulations! You have completed the IronStrength Workout for Runners. Do this workout twice a week and it won't take long to see a noticeable improvement in your running.

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