

Smart steps for stronger calves

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(HealthDay)—Have you been neglecting your calves? Many people forget about these important muscles when doing strength training. These exercises will add definition and help protect against some lower

leg injuries.

Start with seated [calf](#) raises. Sit on a chair or bench with [feet](#) flat on the floor. Lift your right [heel](#) as high as you can, pressing toes into the floor and flexing your calf muscles, then slowly lower your heel. Do this 12 to 15 times, then repeat with your left heel. Build to two sets of 15 reps with each leg.

To increase your range of motion, [place](#) a block in front of your feet and position the ball of your foot on the block for the calf raises. To add resistance, place a weight cuff around the working thigh, about 3 inches from the knee.

Now move to standing calf raises. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding it for balance if necessary. With feet shoulder width apart, slowly rise up on your toes as you tighten your abs. Keep your back and knees straight. Hold briefly, then slowly lower heels to the floor. Build up to two sets of 12 to 15 reps.

To increase the challenge, hold dumbbells at your sides, palms facing inward as you do the exercise.

For another variation, lift your left foot off the [floor](#) while doing raises with your right foot, then reverse. Or do your standing raises on a stair to increase intensity and range of motion. Place toes on the edge of a step, heels hanging off. Slowly raise to tiptoes, hold briefly, then lower all the way back down. Be sure to hold the bannister for balance or place your hands on the sides of the stairwell.

More information: Check out the American Council on Exercise's online library of [lower leg exercises](#).

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