

## WRIST TOUGHNESS

This is the number one deficit Lazoff encounters in clients who are learning to use kettlebells. It could be because so many of us spend our days typing and texting. Fortifying the lower arm helps prevent carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis, and makes it easier to perform daily activities as foundational as pushing open a door or getting up off the floor. In terms of fitness, the benefits are endless. You're required to use your wrists in a lot of exercises, so toughening them will allow for greater progress overall. "If our wrists are weak, it will impact our ability to lift weights or bear weight, which makes it extremely difficult to make strength gains in the gym," Barker says.

## Routine Script

There's no perfect prescription for how often, or even how exactly, to incorporate all of these training tweaks into a program. Some is better than none when it comes to finessing any of these areas and you can customise based on your goals. Sprinkle these movements into your existing workout regimen and warm-up, recommend both Lazoff and Barker. For example, if pull-ups or a heavier deadlift are your targets, you could concentrate on the grip strengtheners. Or if you want a PB in a half-marathon, ankle mobility might be a focus. Work with a physio or trainer for a personalised approach.

## GRIP STRENGTH

There's actually a correlation between grip strength and longevity, studies show. "Grip strength is a marker of overall strength and bone density," explains Lazoff. "It's important for women to maintain muscle mass as we age to prevent osteoporosis - and weak grip is usually an indication that someone will be more at risk for it." Working on it will ultimately allow you to lift heavier weights and do more reps too.



Incorporate farmer carries and/or hang on a pull-up bar (starting with 5- to 10-second intervals), Lazoff suggests. Another tweak: mix up your grip when you're doing other exercises in the gym, like a pull-up or barbell deadlift. Try a neutral grip (palms face each other), overhand, underhand or mixed grip (so, one of each).



Moves that force your wrists to support your weight, like planks, are perfect here. Lazoff says. Start with a rolled yoga mat beneath your palms or use two kettlebells, placing your hands on top of the rounded weights as they lie on their sides on the floor. Then move on to regular planks on your palms, then on your fists, which may be uncomfortable at first but will enhance stability in your wrists. Kettlebell training in general is helpful for both wrist and forearm strength because you often hold the weight using support from your arm, forcing your wrist to work to avoid "breaking" or bending. When you're doing the carries, integrate a racked variation where you bring two kettlebells up to your chest, working to keep the wrists in line with forearms and elbows. Or take two light weight plates and walk with them resting on your hands, overhead, as if you're a waiter who is holding a serving tray.

## FITNESS

## ANKLE MOBILITY

This helps to correct form in almost any lower-body exercise, such as a leg press or even jumping. In addition, "ankle mobility is impactful for walking and running", says Barker. "If you don't have full dorsiflexion (the hand or foot's ability to bend backward), you'll end up loading improperly up the chain, into your knee and hip." That could lead to low-back pain, hip and knee injuries, plantar fasciitis and other problems.



When you drop low, put a squat wedge or two small weight plates under your heels to take a little bit of the burden off the ankle in the bottom of your squat, advises Lazoff. Eventually you'll be able to remove the wedge and squat more vertically. "You want your spine to be straight up and down in the squat, versus your hips going back and your spine being in a tabletop position," Barker also likes squatting against a wall to support the back and holding at the bottom. Other ways to boost ankle mobility: standing barefoot on one foot for up to 30 seconds on each side; pogo jumps with hands on hips; calf raises; lunges; and single-leg deadlifts with a kettlebell held on the same side as the grounded leg. Lazoff says. Reverse step-ups, when you step up onto a bench or box behind you, are another valuable move in this arena. **W**



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