



The author running barefoot in Boulder, Colorado

MICHAEL SANDLER, author of *Run Free*, shares his expertise on going bare to run light and free

BAREFOOT RUNNING CAN HELP YOU RUN LIGHTER, FARTHER AND FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE.

It helps you feel the ground which minimizes impact, increases stability and strengthens you as a runner from the feet on up. And like the Kenyans or Ethiopians, it helps you build springs for legs, giving you added endurance, speed, and comfort, truly helping you "Run Free". Incorporate barefoot training into your routine for your best running ever!

7 Tips on Using Barefoot

1 Barefoot running wakes up your feet and legs, building strong arches, achilles and calf muscles. Like any new motion, you must begin slowly and allow the body to adapt. If not, you'll risk incredible soreness or even injury. Start with only 200 yards and go

barefoot every-other-day, adding 100 yards at a time.

2 To begin, head to a hard surface, not a soft one. Studies show we land lightest on hard surfaces and hardest on soft surfaces as the latter eliminates our "feel" of the ground. So head to a clean, smooth bike path, road, or sidewalk to find your lightest stride.

3 Focus on form. Stand tall and keep your arms high and swinging forward, not side-to-side. Keep your core muscles tight and engaged and avoid folding over at the waist.

4 Land on the balls of your feet to engage your "natural shock absorbers". Studies show this provides up to three-times less impact than landing on your heels.

5 Think quick steps. The shorter your stride, the less wasted energy, bounce, and impact. Aim for 180 strides per minute or greater.

6 Since 18 out of 19 muscles and tendons of the feet attach to the toes, if you want strong arches, you need strong toes. Practice grabbing a golf ball with your toes for a couple minutes every-other-day.

7 Carry your shoes with you as hand weights and slip them on your feet when your skin or muscles fatigue. Always start barefoot before time in a shoe to keep your skin dry and free from sweat.

Barefoot Benefits

1 The more you can "feel" the ground, the lighter you run. Running light helps you protect your knees, back, and entire body from acute and long-term wear-and-tear injuries.

2 Promotes faster leg turnover, further reducing impact and effort while increasing efficiency and endurance.

3 Increases your speed by developing your feet and lower legs into springs.

4 Gives you abs of steel by using your core to support you, rather than your shoes.

5 Strengthens and helps protect your feet.

6 Activates nerve-endings on the bottom of the foot, increasing agility and balance, making you more stable, and less likely to fall, trip, or roll an ankle.

7 Stimulates pressure points on the bottom of the foot. This reduces blood pressure, increases circulation to the feet and lower-legs, reduces cortisol levels or stress, and even boosts the immune system.

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 Michael Sandler is an internationally acclaimed barefoot running and walking coach and best-selling author. He has coached professionally for nearly 20 years. After a near-fatal accident he was told that he would never run again. With an implanted titanium femur and hip, it was only through barefoot running, and lessons learned on the trails that he was able to heal and run pain free.