

Stair Lunge Variations to Increase your Strength, Dynamic Flexibility, and Conditioning

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When it comes to low tech, bang for you buck conditioning tools look no further than your apartment building, office building, high school, college, stadium or any place that gives you access to stairs.

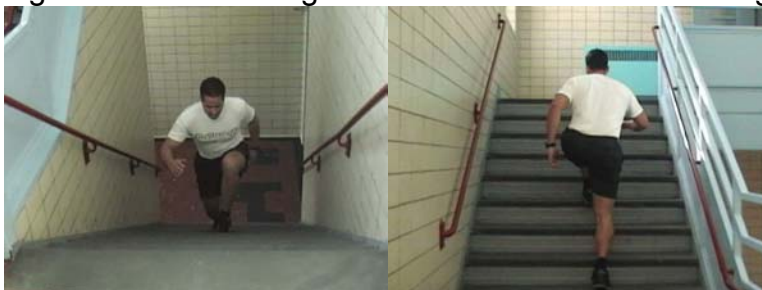
When most people think of stair exercises they usually envision running up stairs for anaerobic conditioning. But the truth is that stair exercises can address just about any fitness goal you can think of. Stairs can be used to improve strength, power, flexibility, and conditioning without the use of any other equipment, except for your body of course. Many people use kettlebells, dumbbells, barbells, and weighted vests so I'll go over workouts combing these tools with stairs. Many of these ideas and workouts I've personally used with elite professional athletes, college and high school students, law enforcement officials, military officials, seniors, teachers, secretaries, and others.

First I'll go over some stair exercises.

Stair Exercises, Variations, and Terminology

Rounds or sets: From the first floor to the top floor and back down is considered a round of stair climbing. This is not written in stone. Call it what you like. I also sometimes call it a set. Also in my own workouts, I rarely walk downstairs. I usually take the elevator down for safety reasons, but also keep in mind in the high school I work in we have to use the stairs to get back down, but we make it a point not to run downstairs and just walk down and take our time. It is not going to improve our conditioning, but in this case safety takes the precedent over improvement.

Stair lunges: stair lunges are simply walking up stairs using 2 or 3 steps at a time. Doing so puts your legs in a mechanical disadvantage thus requiring your legs to become stronger to overcome this disadvantage.



Stair lunges in different directions: Besides using the traditional straight forward lunges you can also do crossover lunges, crossover lunges from the side, side steps ups and so forth.

Crossover forward: Walking up the stairs using this crossover motion is an excellent way to improve your legs dynamic flexibility and will also strengthen you in different planes.



Crossover from side: The main reason to use this crossover variation is that it allows you to find which side is weaker and work on strengthening that side.



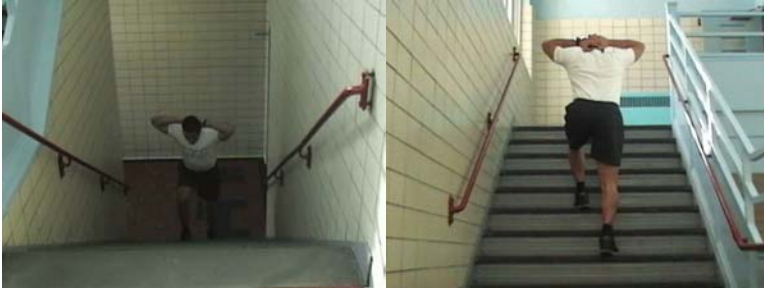
Side to side steps facing forward: This variation is excellent for improving knee stability and is similar to cutting moves seen in soccer and football.



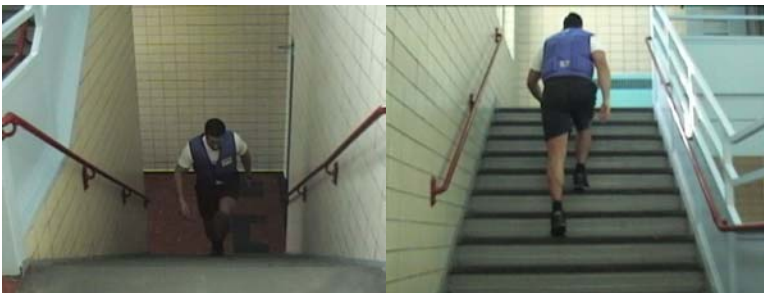
Side step-ups: Once again this is great for finding which side is weaker and allows you work on that particular weakness. It's also great for improving strength in the frontal plane. By the way most ankle injuries occur in the frontal plane.



Hands behind the head: Another way to increase the difficulty of your strength workouts is to place your hands behind your head.



Using a weighted vest: This is an excellent way to add external resistance when 20-30 lunges start to become too easy. Using a weighted vest is also the best way to add resistance when running up stairs.



Use dumbbells, barbells, or kettlebells: Another way to add external resistance when things get too easy. Some kettlebell users do exercises like snatches and such followed by stair climbs. The possibilities are endless.

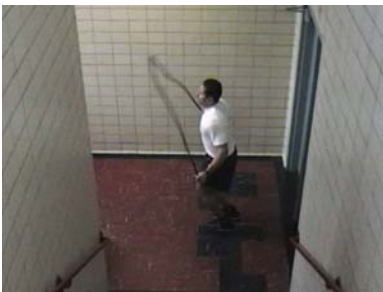
Be careful! Tripping and falling holding weights overhead is not going to improve your health.





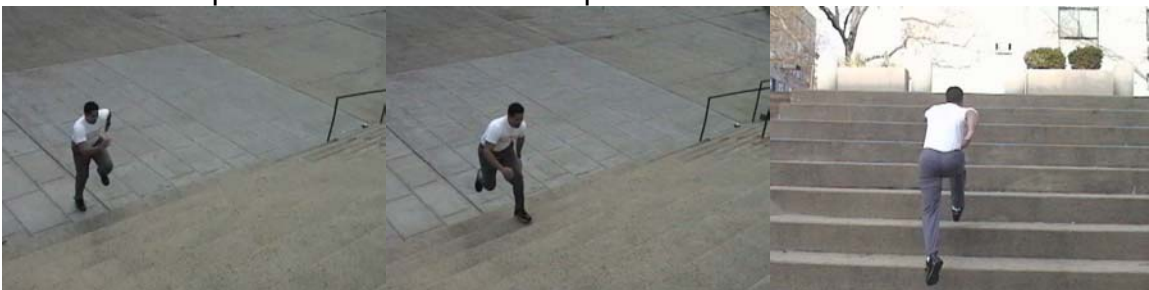
Make use of a jump rope, bodyweight exercises, or dumbbell/kettlebell exercises before or after your climbs:

Again, many people use these types of exercises before or after their climbs to increase workout intensity or to simply focus on specific goals they may have.



Other Ideas to increase your workout intensity and progress to higher levels of conditioning:

Use larger steps: Besides using 2 or 3 steps you can also make use of larger steps. At the high school I work at we have access to double size concrete steps that we use to do some anaerobic work, strength work and power development work. Each step is about the size of 2 steps.



Giant Steps (each step is about the size of 2 standard steps)

Add rounds: As your conditioning improves you can add more rounds for further improvements.

Add flights: Again, as your conditioning improves you can add more flights to challenge you further.

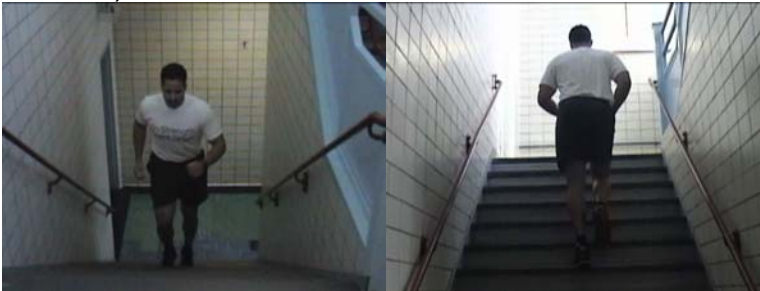
Reduce rest intervals: Another way to change your workouts is to change how long you rest between your climbs. Just changing your rest intervals by 30 seconds can make a huge difference.

Stair Exercise Workouts:

Workout 1: Stair Lunge variations workout (2 or 3 steps at a time)

Note: in this workout I had access to 20 flights.

Round 1: warm-up: Walk up 20 flights (using 1 step) at a slow pace. (4-5 minutes) and then take the elevator down.



Round 2: Do 30 stair-lunges: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).



Round 3: Do 30 stair-lunges in alternating fashion. (Climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).



Round 4: Do 30 crossover-lunges in alternating fashion (climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Round 5: Do 30 crossover lunges from side: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Round 6: Do 30 side to side lunges in alternating fashion. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Round 7: Do 30 side step ups: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

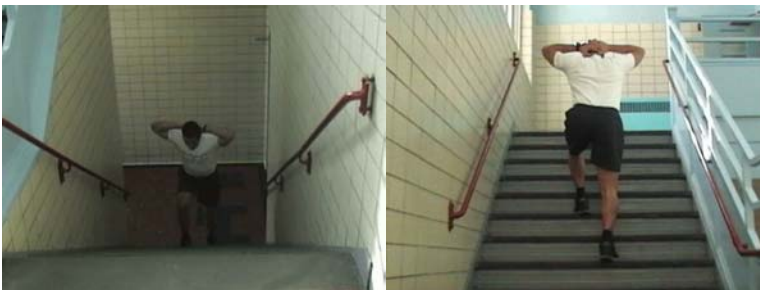
Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Note: It is also possible that some people will not have the strength to climb two steps in any instance. Simply use 1 step.

In this workout you'll be doing lunges in all planes of motion. Remember that it's very important.

Workout 2: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with hands behind the head.



****Same as workout 1 place your hands behind your head.***

Workout 3: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with a weighted vest.



****Same as workout 1 except you'll be using a weighted vest.***

Workout 4: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with dumbbells.



****Same as workout 1 except you'll be carrying dumbbells.***

Workout 5: Stair Lunge variations workout combined with jumping rope

****Same as workout 1 except you'll be jumping rope between each round. You can jump anywhere from 30 seconds up to 5 minutes depending on your goals.***



Workout 6: Stair Lunge variations workout combined with dumbbell, kettlebell, barbell, or bodyweight exercises.

****Same as workout 1 except you'll be performing your choice of bodyweight, dumbbell, kettlebell or barbell exercises before or after each climb. Some ideas:***

One-arm pushups: 1 set of 1-10 one arm pushups before and/or after each climb



Handstand Pushups: 1 set of 5-20 handstand pushups before and/or after each climb



Regular Pushups: 1 set of as many push-ups as you can before and/or after each climb



One Legged Squats: 1 set of 5-10 squats before and/or after each climb



Strength Endurance Squats: 1 set of 20-50 squats before and/or after each climb



Dumbbell, kettlebell, or barbell exercises: Most people prefer to do big bang exercises like the snatches, overhead squats, or lunges.



Dumbbell Reverse Lunge off 1 step: Here I'm doing 20 lunges before a 10 flight climb.

Workout 6: All-Out climb to the 20th floor with dumbbells or kettlebells.

I learned this from a student of mine whose father works in construction. His father told him that a true test of strength is carrying cement buckets up 10 flights of stairs. He was certainly on to something. The thing is he climbed 10 flights of stairs using 1 step at a time. This all out climb will ask you to climb 20 flights using every 2 steps. I myself have done this climb with two 40 pound dumbbells. Is this strength training in technical terms? No, but if you're able to do this you will have achieved a level of strength endurance that many people will never achieve. I suggest you start off by trying to see if you can actually try to climb 20 flights of stairs using every 2 steps first before trying it with any weight.

I hope these workouts and exercises can give you a start on how to incorporate stair exercises into your programs. Obviously, there are many ways to use stair exercises. If you come across other ideas when using stair exercises feel free to share them with me as I may include them in a revised edition of my *Ultimate Stair Exercises* E-Book.

Happy Stair Climbing!

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