

## **Fitness Trend: Barefoot Training**



**What they say:** People are constantly looking for a way to take a step ahead of their competition. A recent trend in fitness is called barefoot or minimalist training. When training this way, people will train either barefoot or in new shoes made by Vibram or Fila which offer little support, and require the foot to absorb much of the impact of running. This is believed to make the muscles of the foot stronger, making the athlete stronger and faster.

**Bottom line:** While there is absolutely no doubt that training barefoot uses more muscles for the foot than in normal shoes, this does not mean that it is always a safe approach to training. When running, the bones of the lower limb are subjected to an incredible amount of stress from the force of one's body weight striking the ground repeatedly. These new minimalist shoes provide little assistance to these bones and their articulations, which is an obvious concern for doctors and physical therapists. No two people have the same body. People's joints, weight, running style, and places where they run all vary significantly, so why should everyone train the same way? These shoes can be very beneficial to a person with the right gait, bone structure, the right type of feet (high arch/flat feet/etc.) who trains in a safe place (flat rubber track), however their effects could be detrimental to others. It is important that anyone considering buying these shoes consults a doctor or physical therapist to make sure that they will be using them in the right way. If you want to get a feel for barefoot running without spending a fortune (\$80+) on the shoes, then head over to the beach volleyball courts on south campus and try some sand sprints!