

Functional Training using Medicine Balls

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This article was to target the use of medicine balls for training. Whilst the focus hasn't changed, it has become somewhat more relevant in this time of shutdown with people looking at ways of training without getting to a gym.

Medicine Ball Training Routines you can do alone (or with a partner)!



There are many different sorts of medicine balls that you can purchase, from the old traditional leather/material types, to the sand filled "Slam Balls".



I personally have used rubberised medicine balls for almost 30-years. In fact, I still have some of those original balls today after almost 3-decades of use!

I like to use this sort of medicine ball for the following reasons:

1. They are waterproof.
2. They can be pumped up tight allowing you to conduct a range of balance/coordination exercises with them.
3. They can roll along the ground making them perfect for any outdoor activity where you want to combine an explosive movement with a run/chase activity.
4. They bounce, which is also useful when you want to try to increase the intensity of your workout and need the ball to rebound back to you quickly.
5. As I only use medicine balls up to 4kg, there is less chance of hurting yourself or others if you accidentally drop it onto yourself (or training buddy).

Let's look at some examples of how you might use Medicine Balls to train a variety of different physical attributes.

1. Core Training

In my [previous article](#), I spoke about the use of medicine balls in training your core strength@range. With the tightly pumped rubberised medicine ball variety, there are a whole range of advanced core stability/coordination exercises you can undertake.

Pushup Position on ball (either hands or feet on ball) variations.



The stronger you are through your core (and core coordinated) the better at these exercises you will become. Early on most of these exercises will be very challenging.

Key tips:

- The ball should be very pumped up (In the above examples I am using a basketball, not a medicine ball).
- The surface should be hard to maximise the instability.
- You should engage your core at all times whilst trying to undertake these exercises. (see above at no stage am I letting my core sag).

Variations to some of the above exercises can include:

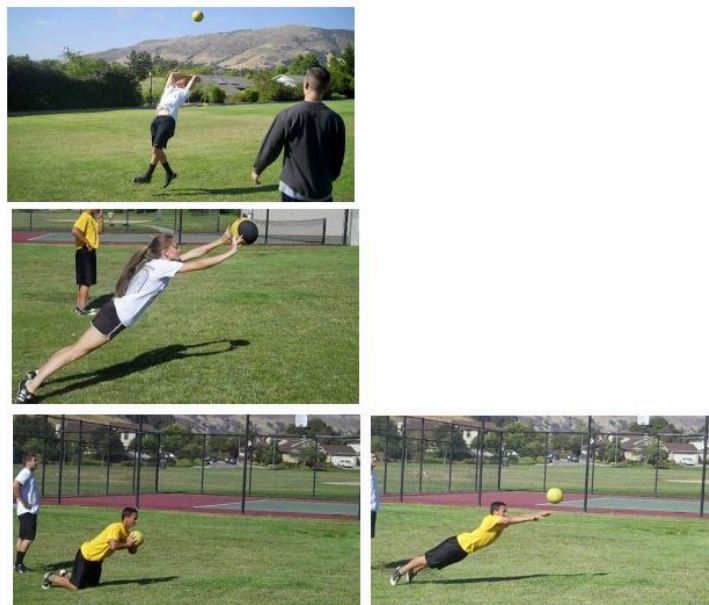
1. With your hands on the ball (Images 1&2), try to perform a pushup.
2. With your feet on the ball (Images 3&4) try to perform a pushup.
3. With your feet on the ball (image 3), try to walk the ball into your hands and back out.

2. Total Body Conditioning

Because these medicine balls will roll some way when thrown, I like to combine a series of throws followed by a chase after the ball. You can structure the work:rest ratio for the workout to be more power/strength focused or it can be highly anaerobic depending on how hard you work and for how long you work...

a. Power-Strength focus:

Throw the ball for distance from a variety of different positions.



Overhead throw

Chest Throw

Coil Throw

Rotational throw



In all the above cases, there is a focus on maximum distance. Try to jump off the ground as you throw the ball.

Once the throw has been completed you can either walk to the ball (maximum recovery), you can jog after the ball, or you can rapidly sprint at full speed after the ball.



b. Aerobic/Anaerobic Focus

There are many ways of turning the above exercises into more of an aerobic/anaerobic workout.

My favourite routine (not so for my clients!!!) is to have them complete a throw for distance (pick any of the above types of throw) and have them run after the ball quickly (working on good running technique). As soon as they get to the ball, have them repeat the throw until they reach the desired distance (I typically have my clients try to do this for the full length of a football field (90m-100m). This is super tough, particularly if you have them do a squat type throw (caber, overhead).



Asking a client to run a set distance carrying a medicine ball in different positions is super tough.

For a future article, but this sort of training is great for improving running technique and conditioning. It is challenging to keep a forward body position & high hips whilst carrying a medicine ball either above your head or in front of your chest AND keeping your knees high!!

You are only limited by your imagination as to how challenging you can make these routines. Even having your clients complete rapid caber throws for height, after 10 or so repetitions they will be sucking in the air.

In pairs, I have had clients throw a single ball along the length of a football field, after each throw, the client that threw the ball has to perform a body weight exercise (pushup, squat jump, etc) whilst his/her partner throws the ball and this routine is alternated for the full length of the field (with the emphasis on pushing each other the full length of the field).

c. High Speed repeated throws

Because of the design of these rubberised balls, they are great for throwing at a wall (or the ground) and they will bounce right back to you. This allows you to complete some really challenging routines without having to take a step.



Repeated Wall throws.

Repeated Floor Slams.



EXAMPLE MEDICINE BALL ROUTINE

This is an example of a session I recently completed with a client.

1. 50m Running Technique Repeats (x 4)
2. Running 40m with medicine ball above head (x 3)
3. Running 40m with medicine ball chest height-straight arms (x 3)
4. Squat walks with Medicine ball above head/chest height (4 × 20 steps)
5. Squat Jumps with medicine ball (above head/chest height (4 × 10)
6. Medicine ball situps (various)
7. Chest Throw-run to ball – pushup on ball – repeat (3 × 40m)
8. Caber Throw to run (2 × 100m).

