

“Kenny, what are those weird monkey feet shoes you’re wearing?”

By Kenny Muir

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If you have seen me at bootcamp or walking around Mixx you know exactly what I am talking about. I recently bought a pair of the Vibram FiveFingers shoes. Although these shoes may look odd, I can assure you they don’t feel weird at all. Once you put them on, your feet will thank you.

Vibram FiveFingers have come out with several different styles of shoe that are great for many activities including, but not limited to:

- light trekking
- running
- yoga
- cross-training
- canoeing and kayaking
- climbing and bouldering

Vibram has patented a high density rubber that allows your feet to both feel the ground and be protected. By allowing your feet to experience full movement at the toes and ankles they help to strengthen the deep muscles of the feet that do not get the same opportunity in a traditional, padded shoe. Take note, however, that there is a time and a place where a traditional shoe is needed for safety and protection of the foot.

The foot is made up of 26 bones, 33 joints, 20 muscles and hundreds of sensory receptors. Vibrams allow you to feel the different surfaces under your foot as if you were barefoot. This stimulates the sensory receptors and proprioceptors within the foot and ankle to become more aware of the surroundings and what muscles need to be recruited in order maintain strength and stability. Greater activation of these receptors during exercise results in an increase in the strength of the foot.

I wear Vibrams to:

1. Increase the strength of the muscles in the lower feet and limbs
2. Improve range of motion in the ankles, feet and toes
3. Stimulate neural function which is important for balance and agility
4. Improve proprioception and body awareness
5. Eliminate heel lift to improve spinal alignment and posture
6. Allow the foot and body to move naturally

So far I have used my Vibram FiveFingers to hike the Grouse Grind, run 10km, work out at MIXX fitness, hike/swim at Cheakamus Lake, sprint and do TRX outdoor training. I have found that they have increased the strength of my lower legs and feet and improved my running form by forcing me to run smoothly with a forefoot strike instead of a heel strike.