



HEALTH

# Jump Start Your Dive Fitness for the New Year

By Guest Author Jan 7, 2016

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By guest blogger Gretchen M. Ashton, CFT, SFT, SFN, NBFE

The New Year is always full of resolutions, and presents a fresh opportunity to commit to fitness for an active, diving lifestyle – the sooner scuba divers start exercising, the better. Jump squats and vertical jumps are a fast and fun way to increase your heart rate and tone the entire body in just a few minutes. Functional exercises, such as squats and jumps, are similar to the way the body moves while performing daily activities. The vertical jump is used to help measure power for sports and is a great way to develop endurance for diving. This unique combination of strength and aerobic exercise builds endurance for kicking against currents, turtling on the surface, hiking across uneven terrain under a load of gear, and surf entry and exit.



To begin, stand with your feet hip-width apart and your arms alongside your body. Inhale while sitting back and briefly drop into a squat. Reverse the squat by jumping vertically, with effort concentrated in all the muscles of the body. At the same time, swing your arms out in front for a bit of safe momentum. To complete the jump, extend the hips, knees and ankle joints and reach high overhead, stretching upward with the arms and torso. Your feet should leave the ground momentarily, and your landing should be firm and controlled in preparation to repeat the vertical jump. The arms swing down (and slightly behind the torso), and the hips, knees and ankle joints flex, returning to the squat position for an instant before jumping again. Performing repetitions of the vertical jump is an advanced exercise – healthy divers might begin with three sets: 10 jumps, a 30-second rest; 10 jumps, a 30-second rest; and finally 10 jumps and a 30-second rest.

Divers with orthopedic challenges or injuries can easily modify the vertical jump to a jump squat on an exercise ball by sitting on the ball instead of squatting. The ball will provide a small amount of bounce to assist in the start of the movement. Place the ball in a corner where two walls meet to prevent it from rolling away. Arms swing alongside and overhead as the body extends but the feet never leave the ground. Most divers, with a wide range of fitness levels, can perform jump squats with an exercise ball. Perform sets of 25 repetitions, rest for 30 seconds and repeat. Monitor your heart rate for both variations of the exercise, and rest for longer than 30 seconds if needed.

Finally, the two movements may be combined into the same exercise session. Perform two sets of jump squats with an exercise ball for a warm-up, then perform three sets of vertical squats followed by two more sets of jump squats on an exercise ball. This adds up to 130 jump squats and vertical jumps – one jump for every foot of maximum depth (130 feet) for advanced divers.



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