



Foam rolling, a type of self-myofascial release, is like a deep tissue massage for your muscles. Self-myofascial release (SMR) helps to break up or relax tight muscles and adhesions formed between muscle layers and their surroundings. It focuses on connective tissue called fascia.

Fascia is tissue that connects with your muscles, bones, and ligaments to provide support throughout your entire body. When it works properly, fascia is elastic and can stretch and move as one with the rest of your body. However, due to intense workouts, poor posture or movement patterns, stress, and lifestyle factors, fascia can tighten and become stiff, restricting movement and even causing pain.

Conventional stretching on its own can't release tight fascia. Direct pressure from a massage therapist, or a tool like a foam roller is needed to release those tight muscles and tissue. *Foam rolling allows individuals to use his/her own body weight to apply pressure to the knots to facilitate relaxation and release, allowing normal blood flow to return and the restoration of healthy tissue. It's easy to do and will yield a ton of benefits.*

Let's ROLL!

How to Foam Roll like a Pro!

How long should I foam roll?

As a general rule of thumb, the amount of time necessary to get benefits is directly related to your current tissue quality. Chances are you have some areas that are more problematic. Spend more time on those and less on the other areas. As you become more familiar with the technique you will also become more efficient and your tissue quality will improve and take less time to 'roll'. A thorough foam rolling session can be completed in less than 10 minutes!

Technique

Take the time to experience the exercises and discover how slightly modifying positions or angles can target different areas of the muscle.

1. Make sure to keep breathing. Holding your breath won't allow the muscles to release and relax.
2. Roll each body part about 45 seconds to 1 minute (for each side when applicable). Slowly roll (about an inch or 2 a second) the targeted area.
3. Always stay on muscle tissue and do not roll over joints or bony structures. If an area feels extremely painful, avoid rolling on it or reduce the amount of pressure you are putting on the area. Foam rolling may feel uncomfortable, but should never feel painful.
4. Never roll on a joint or bone and DO NOT roll your lower back. Yes, I'm repeating myself a bit here!
5. When rolling your upper back be careful not to roll directly on your spine, instead roll one side of your back at a time by slightly leaning to that side. There are small knobs on your vertebrae, called facets, that could get injured when rolling directly on your spine.
6. If you feel discomfort (not pain), stop rolling and REST on the areas for 10-20 seconds. Take deep, relaxed breathes. Remain on the tight spot until the muscle releases but no longer than 30 seconds. Continuing to roll when pain is present activates the muscle spindles, causing increased tightness and pain. A no-no that's counter productive.

Foam Rolling is not recommended for women during pregnancy, people with bleeding disorders, blood clots, skin conditions, advanced diabetes, arthritis, fibromyalgia and other conditions. If you have any medical conditions, please consult your physician before beginning a foam rolling/SMR program.

FOAM ROLLER GUIDE BY BODY PART

Body Part	Technique
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Plantar Fascia (bottom of foot)

Reasons to treat: The plantar fascia is a band of connective tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot. Excessive tension can lead to pain on the bottom of the foot and mobility related injuries.



Place the sole of one foot on the tennis ball. Gently apply pressure and slowly roll the ball back and forth along your plantar fascia. If really painful that means you need to roll, but lessen the pressure! It shouldn't be too painful.

Calves

Reasons to treat: Tight calves can cause pain in the plantar fascia (bottom of foot) or at the front or back of the knee.



Place foam roller under the mid-calf. Cross the opposite leg over the top of the other to increase pressure, if needed. Prop your body up on your arms/hands, being sure to support yourself with a strong core and good posture. Slowly roll calf area up/down to find the most tender spot. Hold that spot for 10-20 seconds until the discomfort is reduced. Switch legs and repeat. May also add cross-friction rotations (rotate leg side to side.)

TIP: It is common to get fatigued in your wrists in this position, so take breaks when necessary. You can also use a tennis ball, easier on arms since you don't have to hold yourself up.

Shins

The outside part of your lower leg

Reasons to treat: Prevent shin splints.



Stabilize your body on top of the roller, gently rolling up and down across the front of the anterior lower leg. Roll from below the knee to the ankle. Another alternative (not pictured) - Lie on your side on the ground with the roller underneath the outside of the lower leg. Place the same side elbow and the opposite hand/foot on the ground. Slowly roll outside of lower leg.

TIP: DO NOT roll directly on the shin bone.

Adductors (inner muscles on the front of the thigh)

Reasons to treat: Excessively tight adductors can lead to knee pain.



Lie face down and place one thigh, flexed and abducted, over the foam roller. Slowly roll the upper, inner thigh area to find the most tender spot. Hold for 10-20 seconds until the discomfort is reduced. Switch legs and repeat.

TIP: This can be especially uncomfortable. Do not force the hold. If painful lessen intensity.

Gluteals

Reasons to treat: Can comprise squat form (excessive chest dip) and lateral knee pain via the IT Band. Also helpful for relieving lower back pain.



Sit on top of the foam roller, positioned on the back of the hip, crossing one foot over the opposite knee. Lean into the hip of the crossed leg. Slowly roll on the glute/hip area to find the tender spot. Hold up to 20 seconds until the discomfort is reduced. Repeat on other side.

CAN ALSO BE DONE WITH a tennis ball! Place the tennis ball under one hip with your hands behind you on the floor. Roll for 30-60 seconds, altering your body position throughout to hit your glutes from multiple angles.

Quadriceps (front of leg)

Reasons to treat: Excessive tension in the quadriceps can lead to knee or hip pain.



Lie face down with the foam roller under the upper front part of your leg. Put your forearms on the ground. Supporting your body weight with your forearms, roll slowly up and down from the bottom of the hip to the top of your knee. Repeat on the other side.

TIP: As you roll, try rotating your legs in and out from the hips - this will allow you to hit your quads more thoroughly.

Hamstrings (back of leg)

Reasons to treat: The hamstrings can often become scarred following strains or repetitive overuse injuries.



Sit with the roller under thighs (hamstrings). Place the palms of your hands on the ground (fingers pointing toward your body). Keep your left foot off the ground by stacking your feet on top of each other (heel of left foot on toe of right foot). Roll up and down, stopping before hitting the back of the knee. Repeat on the other side. Not enough pressure? Try using a tennis ball!

TIP: As you roll, try rotating your legs in and out from the hips - this will allow you to hit your hamstrings more thoroughly.

Upper Back 'Stress Reliever'

Reasons to treat: This move is a postural corrective and upper back tension reliever.



Lie on the floor and place a tennis ball** between your upper back and the floor (place it under a muscle, not on a bone or your spine). Gently lean into the ball and slowly roll it along the tight muscle/knot in your back. When you feel a point of pressure (a knot) hold and relax into it until you feel the knot release. Breathe as you do because it might feel quite intense!

**Shown here with foam roller, but I MUCH prefer the tennis ball version!

Upper Back Unwind/Chest Stretch

Reasons to treat: This move is a postural corrective and upper back tension reliever. Stretches the pec muscles.



Position the roller longitudinally along your spine. Brace core and feet on floor to steady yourself. Allow arms to fall to sides. Feel stretch in chest muscles. Hold for several minutes.

Chest Decompress

Reasons to treat: This move unglues the over-worked chest muscles that tighten due to holding cell phones, typing on computers, cooking, carrying kids... pretty much everything we do!



While leaning against a wall, place a ball just below your collarbone. Spend at least 30 seconds simply breathing into the pressure of the ball. Next, shift from side to side so that the ball scrolls along the upper chest, while you continue to breathe into the ball, for about 1 minute.

Repeat on the other side.

To roll or NOT to roll? - Your IT Band

NOT. Your IT Band is not evil and does not need to be beaten in to submission. You really shouldn't ever be using the roller right on your IT Band. The IT band isn't a muscle. You can't help it relax because it doesn't contract. It's a totally different structure. But you should work on the mobility of the surrounding structures (see above) to prevent IT Band inflammation.