

FOAM ROLLER STRETCHES

Here's a fact that may save you a great deal of time: When stretching a muscle with knots, you are only stretching the healthy muscle tissue. The knot remains intact. To relieve knotted muscles, massage is essential.

Of course nothing beats an expert massage from a professional massage therapist, but you can practice effective self-massage using a foam roller. This technique of using a foam roller on such trigger points is known as “self-myofascial release” (SMFR).

The Benefits of a Foam Roller
SMFR on a foam roller has many benefits, including:

- A foam roller allows you to control the amount of pressure you place on any trouble spots.
- A foam roller is relatively inexpensive.
- A small foam roller can travel with you.
- You can book a massage appointment with your foam roller anytime you wish!

Using a Foam Roller

To use it properly, you will need to control your body weight on the foam roller to generate the pressure necessary to break up the problematic spots, also known as “trigger points.”

WHY MASSAGE?

Massaging a muscle (or group of muscles) prior to stretching has many benefits, including:

- The removal of metabolic waste, such as lactic acid, from the muscle. This will also aid in relieving post-exercise soreness and stiffness.
- Increases blood flow and improves circulation.
- Helps warm up your muscles.
- Relaxes your muscles.



- Roll back and forth across any stiff, painful areas for approximately 60 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, and repeat.
- Maintain proper stability (slight contraction) in your abdominals to protect your core (lower back, pelvis, and hips) during rolling.
- Breathe slowly and naturally throughout the entire exercise—this will help reduce any excess tension that the discomfort of rolling may cause.
- Avoid rolling over your bony areas.
- Perform the foam roller stretches included here three times a week to prevent stiffness and injury, and feel free to roll over any stiff or knotted areas two to three times a day. You can also use the roller on your trigger points before they knot up.
- Follow up with proper stretches that target the muscles you focused on during your foam roller exercises and massages.

MYOFASCIAL BALL THERAPY

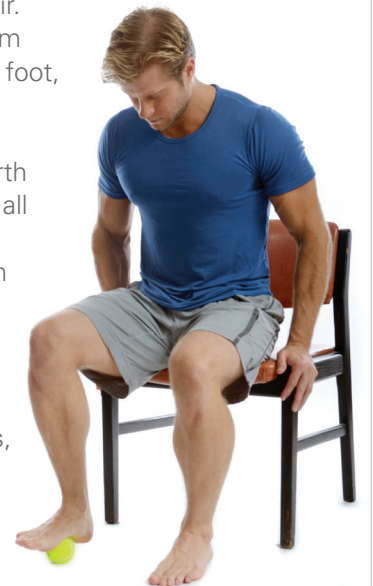
Myofascial ball therapy may be the most inexpensive physical therapy instrument you can invest in. A small ball, such as a tennis ball, travels well and can provide a discreet massage, even in a work environment.

There are many reasons to use a ball for massage: it can relieve pain and physical stress, aid the body in becoming more limber, and help relieve foot and calf muscle cramps (especially for women who wear uncomfortably high heels).

Consider utilizing a tennis ball to massage your calves, hamstrings, gluteals, quadriceps, and back.

TENNIS BALL FOOT MASSAGE

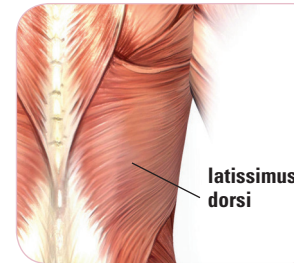
- 1 Sit comfortably on a chair. Place a ball on the bottom center area of your right foot, under the arch.
- 2 Roll the ball back and forth from the ball of the foot all the way to the heel, and then roll it back and forth under the arch of your foot. Give careful attention to any areas that are uncomfortable. Continue for 60 seconds, rest, and then repeat.
- 3 Switch feet, and repeat the sequence.



FOAM ROLLER LAT STRETCH



- 1 Kneel with your buttocks resting on your heels, and then shift your weight to the right so that your bent right leg is in front of the left. Place your hands on the foam roller in front of you.



latissimus dorsi

ANNOTATION KEY
Bold text = stretching muscles
 * indicates deep muscle

- 2 Extend your right arm over the roller, tilt your body to the right, and gently lean your upper body down onto the foam roller.



TARGETS
 • Latissimus dorsi

DO
 • Keep control of your core, and maintain tight gluteal muscles.

AVOID
 • Holding your breath.

- 3 Flatten your right palm on the floor for support, and with your left hand on the foam roller, carefully lift up your lower body enough to allow the foam roller to roll over the broad muscle of your middle back.

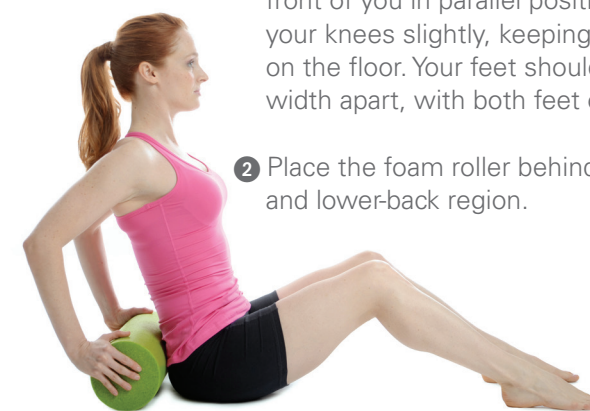
- 4 Pause over uncomfortable areas before rolling back and forth over them until you feel some relief. Continue rolling for 60 seconds. Rest, and then repeat.

BEST FOR

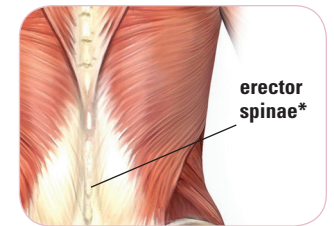
- latissimus dorsi



FOAM ROLLER BACK STRETCH



- 1 Sit on the floor and extend your legs in front of you in parallel position. Bend your knees slightly, keeping your heels on the floor. Your feet should be shoulder-width apart, with both feet on the floor.
- 2 Place the foam roller behind your gluteals and lower-back region.



erector spinae*

ANNOTATION KEY
Bold text = stretching muscles
 * indicates deep muscle

BEST FOR

- erector spinae

- 3 Lean back carefully onto the foam roller. Raise your hips slightly off the floor, lifting your buttocks upward as you simultaneously take small steps forward, allowing you to begin rolling the foam roller upward on your back.



TARGETS
 • Back

DO
 • Place your hands behind your head, extend them downward on the sides of your body, or wrap your arms around your chest.

AVOID
 • Holding your breath.

- 4 Pause over uncomfortable areas before rolling back and forth over them until you feel some relief. Continue rolling for 60 seconds. Rest, and then repeat.

EXPERT'S TIP

To come out of this stretch at any time, lower your buttocks to the floor while taking baby steps forward.

