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# SELF MYOFASCIAL RELEASE AND FOAM ROLLING

Self Myofascial Release (SMR) is a form of manual soft tissue therapy used to treat pain, tightness, "trigger points," soreness, and restriction of motion. It works by relaxing contracted muscles, increasing circulation, and stimulating the stretch reflex of muscles and overlying fascia. SMR techniques can improve flexibility, function, performance, and reduce injuries by improving your "tissue quality." By removing the adhesions and scar tissue that may impair tissue length, we improve tissue quality first, to truly improve flexibility and recoverability.

### Benefits of Self Myofascial Release

- Correct muscle imbalances
- Increase joint range of motion
- Decrease muscle soreness & relieve joint stress
- Increase neuromuscular efficiency
- Maintain normal functional muscular length

- Fascia is connective tissue that supports and protects structures in the body, including muscle.
- If fascia becomes restricted, it can be stiff, tender/sore/painful, tight, and sometimes lead to scarring or diminished blood flow.
- You may feel painful knots or tight bands in the muscle.
- This irritation can be caused by exercise, overtraining, poor movement mechanics, or acute trauma.

### Three common tools for Self Myofascial Release:

- Foam roller
- Massage Stick (The Stick<sup>®</sup>)
- Tennis ball or racquet ball
- Golf ball

### Common Areas for SRM:

Hamstrings	TFL
Quadriceps	Glutes
IT Bands	Hip flexors
Calves	Back

### Which Foam Roll to Use:

Use a softer or harder foam roller depending on your personal level of comfort or discomfort, and sensitivity to increasing pressure. The sensation should feel like "good pain."

You can also use a tennis ball massage to achieve a release by applying the right amount of pressure: enough to do some good, but not enough to irritate the knot. A golf ball can offer relief from plantar fasciitis.

SMR targets the muscle, surrounding fascia, and other connective tissue. Direct self-myofascial release uses tools or body parts (knuckles, thumbs, elbows) to apply pressure to tight or sore areas to slowly compress and stretch the restricted fascia. It can also warm the muscle and improve nutrient delivery by improving circulation. SMR and static stretching both work to release tension and provide active lengthening to fascia, connective tissue, and muscles. Stretching and release in one area can often lead to release in surrounding areas too.

### You can utilize Self Myofascial Release whenever you feel you need it:

- Pre-exercise to warm the muscle and ensure flexibility and strength
- Post-exercise to relax the muscle, promote blood flow, and enhance muscle recovery
- As needed on non-training days; anytime your muscles feel tight or sore.

### Procedures for Self Myofascial Release:

1. Roll the muscle gently, then with added pressure.
2. Roll each side or area 10-20 times (1-2 minutes), following the full length of the muscle but working side-to-side to cover the entire muscle area too.
3. If a trigger point is present (painful area), stop rolling and hold for 30-45 seconds with constant pressure.
4. Remember to breathe slowly as this will help to reduce any tense reflexes caused by discomfort.
5. Static stretch after SMR to increase flexibility.
6. You can complete the self myofascial release exercises 1-2 x daily.

**\*\*Consult medical staff before using self-massage techniques on injured muscles or an area of acute inflammation/pain. Pain has many different causes; always have a qualified practitioner rule out other disorders.**

### Foam Roller Back Extension Stretch

- Position the foam roller perpendicular to your spine, with hips on the floor and hands behind your head
- Extend your spine over the roller and open your chest by pushing your elbows down
- Vary the position of the roller along your thoracic spine



### Iliotibial Band (IT) Foam Roller Self Massage

- Position the outside of the thigh on the roller with the leg straight
- Roll forward and back on the roller, pulling or pushing with the hand. Roll from the hip all the way down the length of the thigh (side of the knee).



### Quadriceps Foam Roller Self Massage

- Keep the forearms or hands on the ground with your hips squared and your spine straight
- Press the body forward and backward to roll the front of your thighs over the roller
- Work all the way up and down, and slightly side-to-side, from your hips down to your knees



### Tensor-fascia Late (TFL) Foam Roller Self Massage

- Position the top of the hip (tensor fascia late muscle) on the roller with the leg straight.
- Roll forward and back on the roller, focusing on the top of the hip. Rotate the leg to vary the position of the massage.
- The range of movement for this exercise does not need to be very big.



### Calf Foam Roller Self Massage

- Keeping the leg straight, roll the entire calf muscle back and forth over the foam roller
- Turn the thigh in and out to massage all aspects of the calf.



### Peroneal Foam Roller Self Massage

- Position the outside of the lower leg (peroneal muscles) on the roller with the leg straight.
- Roll forward and back on the roller, all the way down the length of the lower leg.
- Rotate the leg to vary the location of the massage.



### Hamstring Foam Roller Self Massage

- Place one leg over the other and roll the posterior thigh back and forth on the roller, keeping the leg straight.
- Turn the thigh in and out to massage all aspects of the hamstrings.



### Latissimus Dorsi Foam Roller Self Massage

- Position the foam roller under the latissimus dorsi muscle, and roll forward and backward
- To modify the exercise, vary the position of the foam roller under the muscle.



### Buttock Foam Roller Self Massage

- Place the foot on opposite knee and roll the buttock back and forth on the foam roller.
- Rotate the hips to massage all aspects of the buttocks.

