



Rolling With It

Foam Roller Tutorial

**Please be sure to consult a physician before attempting these exercises.*

As you age, you lose elasticity in your joints and connective tissue—and suddenly, you can end up feeling pain while completing the simplest of tasks, like walking up the stairs. Research shows that a massage can reduce stiffness and soreness by more than 40%. However, a foam roller offers an even better (and cheaper!) way to rid yourself of nagging aches, pains, and soreness, all from the comfort of your home or office!

Foam rolling is a type of self-myofascial release in which pressure is applied to certain body parts to relieve pain. Because of this, trainers and physical therapists refer to their foam roller as their secret weapon against pain. Similar to an old-fashioned rubdown, foam rolling breaks up fibrous tissue and boosts circulation so you're less sore. When combined with static stretching, studies show that foam rolling can also lead to increased flexibility and reduced inflammation, scar tissue, and joint stress, as well as, improved circulation and range of motion.

These exercises can be performed separately, or you can combine them into a 10-minute pre or post workout routine. Since it's best to perform roller exercises once your muscles are warm, you'll need to do a quick five-minute warm-up if you opt to do them right before a training session.

For each exercise, slowly roll back and forth as described for 20 to 30 seconds before moving on to the next exercise. As you roll, take deep, slow breaths to help your muscles relax. Always avoid rolling onto your joints - the roller should stay positioned under your muscles at all times. If you hit a particularly tight or tender spot, stop rolling and apply direct pressure until the pain subsides.

If you're new to foam rolling, start by incorporating these exercises into your routine every other day for 2-3 weeks. After that, you can try doing it once or twice daily - both before and immediately after your workouts.

Enjoy and have fun rolling!

Foam Roller Exercises

Hamstrings



Position yourself so the roller is directly under your hamstring and relax your hamstring. Slowly roll forward and back from the base of your glutes to the bend in your knee for 20 - 30 seconds. Try it with your toes pointed up and then with your toes pointed out in front of you to work your hamstring from all angles. Switch sides and hold for 20 - 30 seconds.

Calves



Sit on the floor with both legs straight out, your hands behind you supporting your weight. Start just below the knee and slowly work the roller down to your ankle, pausing for a second and then slowly rolling back and forth on tender spots. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds each side.

Outer IT Band



Lay on your side with the foam roller under your hip. Place both hands in front of you and your other leg behind you or in front for support. With your abs and glutes engaged, slowly work the roller down your outer thigh to just above your knee. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds each side.

Hip Flexor



Place the foam roller beneath you at your hip with your forearms in front for support and slowly work your way down to just above the knee. Pause on tender spots and slowly roll back and forth for 30 seconds. To increase pressure, keep your buttocks in the air. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds on each side.

Thigh



Lay face down on the floor in a plank position with the foam roller under your hips and your forearms planted firmly in front for support. Start by slowly rolling down from your hip to just above the knee. Pause on any tender spots and gently rock back and forth until pain subsides. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds on each side.

Upper Back



Sit on the floor with your knees bent in front of you and lay back so your shoulder blades are resting on the foam roller. Put your hands behind your head and interlock your fingers or rest your hands on your chest. Engage your core and slowly raise your pelvis so your back is parallel with the floor. Once you're balanced, slowly begin to crawl your legs forward so that the foam roller moves up and down your spine toward your neck and down to where your rib cage ends. Be careful not to roll your lower back. You can go up and down as many times as you feel necessary. Pause at tender areas and gently rock back and forth until pain subsides. Do this as long as you like or until tension is released from tender spots.

Horizontal Back



Lay face up with the foam roller horizontally positioned under your upper back (below shoulder blades), knees bent, and feet flat. Extend your arms to your sides with palms facing up (imagine forming a capital letter T with your body). Tighten your core and press into feet, lifting hips slightly to slowly roll from upper to middle back. When you find a tender spot, hold, release, and then repeat for 20 - 30 seconds.

Push Up



Push-ups are another versatile drill with countless variations to choose from as well as innumerable strength and performance benefits. What separates push-ups on a foam roller apart from other variations, is that the slightly unstable surface can help to improve shoulder health and function with increased contributions from the rotator cuff and shoulder stabilizers.

Start in the push up position with your hands on the roller, your back and arms straight, and focus on stabilizing with your abs. Hold for 30-60 seconds. To increase performance results, slowly lower your arms until your chest touches the roller. Then slowly push yourself back up until your arms are straight. For added difficulty – and increased Serratus Anterior involvement – you can slightly elevate your feet onto a low box or bench behind you.