

Foam Rolling 101: Roll Out Those Knots in Your Muscles!

By: NASM Editorial Staff

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Would you believe that your function could be improved in just 10 minutes a day? Sound too good to be true? By performing self-myofascial release techniques on a simple piece of foam, you can improve body composition, flexibility, function, performance, and reduce injuries. Simply stated, use your own body weight to roll on the round foam roll, massaging away restrictions to normal soft-tissue extensibility. Furthermore, you can perform this program in the convenience of your own home.

WHAT IS SELF-MYOFASCIAL RELEASE?

Self-myofascial release (SMR) massage can be defined as an interactive soft tissue release technique that requires feedback from the client to determine the correct position, amount of pressure and duration of the stretch. The main purpose for use includes:

- Joint stiffness
- Muscle tightness
- Identified tenderness (indicating poor circulation)

You can also use this technique for a warm-up before exercise and a cool-down after exercise:

- Exercise preparation
- Exercise recovery

HOW DO I PERFORM THIS TECHNIQUE?

SMR techniques use an individual's body weight and/or force with various tools such as bio-foam rolls, tennis balls, soft balls, thumb pressure or pressure knobs. Body weight and/or muscular force with the chosen tool are used to decrease tenderness in your body's soft tissues followed by performing slow rhythmical movements which compress and lift the soft tissues, aiding in the breakdown of tissue "knots" (tissues that bond together).

BENEFITS OF SELF-MYOFASCIAL MASSAGE

- Helps alleviate tightness in muscles
- Increases range of motion at joints such as the shoulder
- Decreases muscle soreness

- Keeps muscles at their optimal lengths
- Helps to relieve joint stress

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Start by searching the tissues for tenderness. If tenderness is identified, hold foam roll on the "hot-spot" for 10-12 sec. Repeat by coming back to area 3-5 times or until tenderness has subsided.

2. If tenderness is too much to handle simply add another foam roll dispersing body weight over a greater surface.

3. If no tenderness is identified while SLOW rolling, continue in a smooth rhythmical manner.

4. Maintain a tight stomach by pulling the belly button back towards the spine.

5. Do not perform under the following conditions:

- Feelings of nausea
- Dizziness
- Pain
- Acute rheumatoid arthritis
- Painful varicose veins

6. You can perform SMR massage 1-2 x daily.

SELF MASSAGE FOR THE LOWER BODY

The following is a lower body sequence that exercisers at all levels can benefit from. Complete exercises 1-6 before switching legs. Remember to move slow and smoothly.

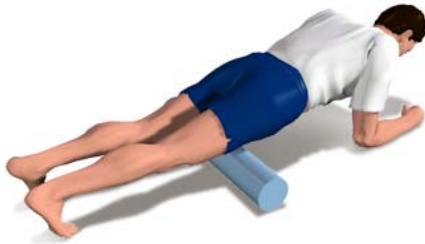
1. **Outside of lower leg**

Sit on the floor with your lower leg on the roller, near your ankle. Cross one leg over the opposite, resting your ankle on your shin. With your elbows supporting you, lift your glutes and back off the floor and move so that you can slowly roll your calf along the roller. Pause at any tender spots for 10-12 seconds. Readjust if needed, and continue to exercise.



2. Front of upper leg

Continuing from exercise 1, turn over to a face down position and place the foam roll slightly above the knees. Slowly roll from knee toward hips while keeping quadriceps relaxed.



3. Buttocks

Sit on the roller, leaning on your glute, with one foot crossed and resting on opposite knee. Hold that knee, and put one hand behind you for support. Slowly roll along your rear hip, again stopping at tender points.



4. Front of hip

Turn over so your front hip is on the roller. Your leg should be straight out, your opposite knee should be bent with foot on the floor for balance. Now, starting at the hip, slowly roll down over the front of your thigh to your knee (see exercise 5).



5. Side of leg

Continuing from exercise 4, position yourself side lying on foam roll. Bottom leg is raised slightly off floor. Maintain head in "neutral" with ears aligned with shoulders. Roll slowly to the knee. To transition into exercise 6, simply roll to the front of the thigh progressed by straddling the foam roll (see exercise 6)



6. Inside of leg

Straddle the roller, with your inner right thigh resting on it, supporting your upper body on both elbows. Roll from your knee toward your hip.



Complete exercises 1-6 on opposite leg.

CHOOSING A FOAM ROLL

When choosing a foam roll, make sure the foam roll is hard and dense. If the foam is too soft, less than adequate tissue massage is applied. On the other hand, if the foam is too hard, bruising and more advanced soft-tissue trauma may occur.