

Foam Roller Exercises

Foam rollers can commonly found at sporting goods stores or online. Regularly using a foam roller offers many of the same benefits as a sports massage, including reduced inflammation, scar tissue and joint stress, as well as improved circulation and improved flexibility.

For each exercise, slowly roll back and forth as described for 20 to 30 seconds to start and up to 5 minutes per exercise. You should not be moving at more than one inch per second. As you roll, take deep, slow breaths to help your muscles relax. Always avoid rolling onto your joints and bony prominences such as your knee cap- 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 for 5-30 seconds, then rock that area back and forth slightly until the pain subsides.

Upper Back (Thoracic Spine)

Start: Rest your back against the broad side of a roller positioned underneath your shoulder blades. Bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor. Lift your butt and place your hands behind your head, or cross your arms over your chest.

Roll: Keeping your core muscles tight, slowly roll forward and back so that the roller moves up and down between the middle of your back and the top of your shoulder blades.

Tip: Don't tilt your head forward to look at your legs as you roll - this may place stress on the spine. Keep your head and neck in line with your back at all times.



Quadriceps (Patellar Tendonitis/Osgood Shlatters)

Start: Lie face down with the roller positioned directly under your thighs. Bend your elbows so that your forearms are flat on the floor to support your weight - your feet should be suspended above the floor as shown.

Roll: Keeping your abs drawn in and core muscles tight, use your arms to gently roll your body forward and back to move the roller up and down from your pelvic bone to just above your knees.

Tip: Want to increase the intensity and really get at that ache? Stack your feet to roll one quad at a time.



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Iliotibial (IT) Band

Start: Position your left hip against the broad side of a roller on the floor. Cross your right leg over your left as shown, and put both hands on the ground for support.

Roll: Using your left arm to assist the motion, roll your thigh back and forth over the roller from just below your hip to above your knee. Continue rolling for the allotted time, then switch positions to work your right leg.

Tip: If you need more pressure to loosen things up, stack your legs - but keep in mind that your stability will be challenged.



Glutes

Start: Sit on the floor with your legs straight. Extend your arms to lift your glutes, place the broad side of a foam roller under your butt, and bend one leg and angle your body so one cheek bears the brunt of your weight.

Roll: Move your glute back and forth across the roller (keep in mind that the range of motion will be small). When your time is up, shift your weight to the other side and repeat.

Tip: Press through your palms and move through your shoulders to shift forward and back.



Hamstrings

Start: Sit with your legs extended in front of you and the broad side of a roller positioned directly under your thighs. Place your hands flat on the floor behind you for support.

Roll: Using your arms to initiate the motion, slowly roll back and forth to move the roller up and down from the bottom of your glutes to just above your knees.

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



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Calves

Start: Sit on the floor with the roller underneath your calves. Place your hands on the floor behind you and raise your butt off the floor - all of your body weight should be on your hands and the roller.

Roll: Slowly roll forward and back to move the roller up and down from just below your knees to above your ankles.

Tip: To up the intensity, do the move one side at a time by stacking your legs. To change the emphasis, try turning your feet in or out as you roll.



Shins

Start: Get on your hands and knees on the floor, with the broad side of a foam roller placed underneath your shins; your hands should be positioned just in front of your shoulders on the ground, and your heels rotated slightly outward.

Roll: Shift your weight forward, bringing your shoulders in front of your hands, to move the roller from your ankles to just below your knees.

Tip: Make sure you don't roll directly onto your knees - this can cause discomfort and exacerbate injuries.



Adductors (Groin)

Start: Lie on your stomach with one leg extended slightly to the side, knee bent. Place the roller in groin area of the extended leg and roll the inner thigh.

Roll: While on your elbows, Shift your weight side to side, to move the roller in and out of your upper and lower groin.

Tip: Press through your elbows/forearms and move through your shoulders to shift side to side.

