

# Foam Rolling 101

Foam rolling is a great start to a workout to warm-up, increase mobility and ranges of motion in the muscles, as well as for recovery. Everyone has tight muscles and tissue from sitting too much, lifestyle, or from training and fitness endeavours.

The best way to describe foam rolling is: a self-guided soft tissue ‘massage’, also known as self-myofascial release (SMR) using varying densities of foam roller devices. The firmer the foam roller, the more intense the experience.

The foam roller is used to “roll” back and forth on the desired region or muscle using body weight as pressure, for 15-20 times to release the tissue, or fascia. It’s like using a rolling pin to roll out dough. Since it is self-guided, one can use as much, or as little pressure as feels comfortable, rolling back and forth until the tenderness eases. Many report a general feeling of being ‘looser’ after foam rolling.

Superficial fascia is a soft connective tissue that is located just below the skin. It wraps and connects the muscles, bones, nerves, and blood vessels of the body. Together, muscle and fascia make up what is called the myofascial system.

Studies show that SMR or foam rolling can bring about a reduction in muscle soreness and increased flexibility when used on specific areas only twice per week for 15 minutes at a time. However, if 15 minutes is not available, there is still a lot of benefit foam rolling for 5-10 minutes pre-workout, post-workouts, or in-between workouts to feel a benefit.

Foam rolling is generally considered safe, but it’s a good idea to first check with your doctor, particularly if you have any heart or vascular illness or any chronic pain conditions.

## Foam rolling can be helpful in addressing the following conditions:

- IT band syndrome
- Patellofemoral pain syndrome (runner’s knee)
- Shin splints
- Lower-back pain
- Infrapatellar tendinitis (jumper’s knee)
- Blood flow
- Muscle soreness
- Joint range of motion

Generally, the biggest muscles on the body will be the easiest to target - upper and lower back, quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes - and also happen to be the most tight on most people.



## Back

Lay back onto the foam roller and prop yourself up, keeping your hips off the floor. Use your legs to roll up and down the back. Try hugging yourself for one variation, then arms over your head for another variation.



## Quads

Lay the foam roller over the front of the legs. Prop yourself up on your elbows and roll your entire quad muscle, back and forth. Start with your upper quad and then move to your lower quad by your knees. For more intensity, try just one leg.



## Hamstrings

Prop both legs on top of the foam roller. Use your arms to lift your upper body off the ground with back of legs on foam roller and roll back and forth. For more intensity, try just one leg.



## Glutes

Sit on top of the foam roller, place one foot onto the opposing knee. Use one arm to support yourself on the floor, leaning into the leg that is propped up on the opposing knee. Roll back and forth. If this is too intense, drop the foot and just lean to one side and roll back and forth.

