

OrthoBethesda Therapy Services

Foam Rolling (FR) Exercises

Foam rolling (FR) is a form of self-myofascial release (SMR) that helps to improve tissue alignment and quality. SMR is essentially a form of self-massage that utilizes certain tools (i.e foam rollers, tennis balls, etc.) designed to reduce the stresses to the hands that can be caused by performing self-massage. Studies have shown numerous benefits resulting from FR, such as increased muscle activation and flexibility, and decreased injury risk and muscle soreness.

General Instructions:

- Perform during the warm-up and/or cool-down when exercising
- Slowly move the roller along the muscle while applying moderate pressure
 - Move about 1 inch per second
 - Spend 1-2 minutes per body part
 - Change the angle with each pass in order to target the entire muscle
 - Spend extra time pausing on tender areas or rocking back/forth or side-to-side slightly
- When rolling on the arms or legs:
 1. Begin near the wrists/ankles
 2. Move FR toward the center of the body
 3. Remove pressure & return back to starting position

Safety:

- *Avoid rolling directly over the joints (i.e knee, elbow, spine)*
- Tell your physical therapist if you have any of the following conditions apply to you, as foam rolling may not be appropriate:
 - Recent Fracture or injury
 - Osteoporosis/Osteopenia
 - Anticoagulant (Blood Thinner) Medication Use
 - Peripheral Vascular Disease (PVD)
 - Infection
 - Sensory loss

Examples of Areas Commonly Targeted by FR:

1. Quadriceps
2. Hamstrings
3. Glutes/Hip Rotators
4. Calves
5. Lateral Thigh (IT band)
6. Lats
7. Mid/Upper Back
8. Pecs

Exercise Descriptions:

1. Quadriceps

- Begin by lying face down, with the FR placed just above the knees
 - If more pressure is desired, you may shift the FR laterally and roll on one leg only
- Roll the FR upward to just below the hip crease



2. Hamstrings

- Begin in long-sitting, with the FR placed just above the back of the knees
 - If more pressure is desired, you may cross one ankle over the other and roll on one leg only
- Roll the FR upward to the buttocks



3. Glutes/Hip Rotators

- Begin in sitting, with the FR placed under the buttocks
 - If more pressure is desired, you may shift the FR laterally and roll on one leg only
 - To intensify the exercise, you may stretch the hip by crossing the ankle (of the side you are applying pressure) over the opposite thigh, just above the knee
- Roll back and forth or side-to-side a few inches to target the entire area



4. Calves

- Begin in long-sitting, with the FR placed just above the heel
 - If more pressure is desired, you may cross one ankle over the other and roll on one leg only
- Roll the FR upward to just below the back of the knee



5. Lateral Thigh (IT Band)

- Begin by lying on your side, with the FR placed just above the outside of the knee that is closest to the floor
- Roll the FR upward to the lateral hip
 - *Make sure to avoid placing pressure directly over the bony area near the top of the thigh!*



6. Lats

- Begin by lying on your side, with your arm raised forward to 90° or higher and the FR placed just below your armpit
- Roll back and forth or side-to-side a few inches in order to target the entire area



7. Mid/Upper Back

- Begin by lying on your back, with the FR placed under your lower ribs
 - *Make sure to roll on either side of the spine, not directly on the spine!*
 - Hug your elbows with your arms and push your elbows away from your chest (This will move your shoulder blades out of the way)
- Roll the FR upward to the top of the shoulder/base of the neck
- Rolling may also be performed in a top-to-bottom direction



8. Pecs

- Lie face down, with your arm raised to the side 90° or higher and the FR placed just below your armpit
- Roll back and forth or side-to-side a few inches in order to target the entire muscle

