



Recovery

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If you train hard, you need to recover just as hard. What you do between strength training sessions will affect your performance during your next workout in the gym. There have been numerous articles written about the importance of good nutrition and quality sleep to help your body recovery after a hard workout. One area that is often overlooked is the idea of improving the quality of soft tissue through massage and manual therapy techniques. An easy way to enhance the quality of your soft tissue and help prevent injuries is to perform self myofascial release with a foam roller. We will discuss the benefits of using the foam roller and illustrate how easy it is to use.

The foam roller is used to improve the quality of myofascial tissue (muscle and connective tissue). Foam rolling helps to aid in breaking up trigger points and muscle adhesions. Muscle adhesions and trigger points can alter the length and function of the muscle. Over time, altered movement patterns can cause over-use injuries. Foam rolling also promotes blood flow to the targeted muscle group. This should help aid in recovery by clearing out lactic acid – a byproduct of high intensity exercise.

Foam rolling is especially significant to help athletes prevent injuries due to the repetitive motions in their sport. For example, baseball pitchers can throw a high volume of pitches during

a typical practice week. The muscles in a pitchers shoulder and upper back have to work to decelerate the upper arm. Over time, these muscles will begin to shorten, causing trigger points or muscle adhesions to form. It would be beneficial for pitchers to foam roll their posterior shoulder and upper back muscles to help promote adequate muscle length and function. Body builders also perform high volumes of exercises over a given training period, which can increase the chance for over-use injuries. Between lower body strength training sessions it would be beneficial to restore muscle length and improve soft tissue quality with a foam roller. This would help a body builder recover so they could blast their legs again during the next strength training session.

Once you have performed self myofascial release with a foam roller, it is then recommended to stretch the targeted muscles. Desensitizing the trigger points and reducing/eliminating the adhesions will help restore the proper length and function to the muscle and surrounding tissue. This would be the appropriate time to stretch (Increase the functional flexibility of the muscle and surrounding tissue).

How to perform self myofascial release with the foam roller:

Start by identifying an area of muscle tension, tightness, or sensitivity. Then lie on the foam roller so that particular muscle group is pressed against the foam. The key is to find the area of sensitivity and hold that spot for 10-30 seconds. After holding it, roll back and forth around the area. Once you release the tissue, it would then be recommended to perform range of motion exercises (stretches). Repeat this on a daily basis until the muscle tightness or sensitivity begins to subside.

Take home message: It is extremely important to take care of your body after a hard workout or training session. Soft tissue will begin to break down overtime if you allow trigger

points and muscle adhesions to remain present. One of the easiest and most affective solutions is to foam roll at least a couple days a week. It is important to note that you will only see the true benefits of myofascial release when it is applied regularly.