

April 3, 2020

What is a foam roller? What does it do for you? Why do it? Is it really here to stay or just another one of those health and fitness fads? In this article, learn about the top five reasons health experts recommend adding a foam roll to your wellness toolkit.



Top 5 Reasons to Foam Roll

By Peter Roach, RMT, CNMT

These are extraordinary times. With COVID-19 running rampant throughout the world, social distancing has become the norm. We, as Massage Therapists cannot treat patients due to the social distancing regulations. Our office has closed and will remain so until such time our College and the Government allow us to reopen.

It's difficult as a therapist to think of the patients I regularly see yet cannot

help at this time with hands on work. So I thought it might be helpful to share with my valued patients, strategies you can do at home until your next Massage Therapy appointment. Foam rolling may not replace my hands working your tissue but it is a great replacement for now.

I personally have set up a simple home gym to keep in shape and healthy through this lockdown. I suspect it will be many

months before the ban is lifted and I can get back to Massage Therapy, the gym and socializing. So let me share with you over the following weeks information to keep you healthy through this pandemic.

**Peter Roach, RMT, CNMT,
Laser Therapist**



What is a Foam Roller, Exactly?

By WebExercises

As [Prevention](#) points out, the first thing to know about foam rollers is that they come in a range of shapes, sizes, surface textures and densities – just like other therapeutic devices such as pillows and mattresses!

Foam rollers range in firmness from low density (semi-soft) to high density (extra firm). Some have a smooth exterior while others have textured surfaces like ridges, spikes or knobs.

In diameter, a foam roller can be long or short, wide or narrow. Some foam rollers look more like sports balls while others are sliced in half, with a flat, stable surface on one side and a curve on the other. Still others are hollow inside and some special foam rollers even vibrate for an extra massaging impact.

All foam rollers are made of some type of durable synthetic plastic material. On the soft end you will find the PE, or Polyethylene, foam rollers. Standard density foam rollers are usually made of EVA, or Ethylene Vinyl Acetate. Firm foam rollers are typically made of EPP or Expanded Polypropylene.

How Is a Foam Roll Used?

As [Healthline](#) explains, using a foam roller is a form of SMR, or self-myofascial release.

Say what? SMR could just as easily be called deep tissue massage and, in fact, it is.

It is easy to overlook just how much we ask of all the various muscle groups in our body. Stand up, sit down, turn, stretch, bend over, straighten up – our muscles are working constantly to support us.

Whether or not you are actively engaged in a [WebExercises](#) activity regimen, your muscles are

Enter SMR, or self-administered deep tissue massage. Here, the label “self-administered” comes into play because you are using your own body weight to apply the desired or required level of pressure to produce the results you seek.

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guaranteed to get sore just from daily demands. Tension, inflammation, systemic stress – all of these can cause muscle tension and soreness that over time begin to limit range of motion and cause chronic pain.

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According to [Women’s Health](#), the soreness arises from tiny muscle tears that turn into adhesions, or knots, in the area where muscle meets fascia, or surrounding connective tissue.

When you roll that knot over your foam roller, the sensation at first is not unlike what John Cougar Mellencamp sings about in his immortal song “hurts so good.”

But afterwards, the knots get broken up and smoothed out and you just feel good. This is why foam rolling is so popular today – because it helps your body heal and feel better right away and on an ongoing basis.

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Here is my make shift home gym that I am using during COVID-19. Some dumbbells, kettlebells, TRX, bands, ab rollers and foam rollers to complete the gym.



Top 5 Reasons to Foam Roll

By WebExercise

1. Increase range of motion in joints

[Harvard Health](#) reports that foam rolling can be effective in a number of ways to increase range of motion in joints and flexibility. The reason for this is simple and it is the same reason why people often seek out deep tissue massage therapy, chiropractic and other forms of myofascial release. However, with foam rolling, you don't have to wait for an appointment or pay extra money to get the relief you are seeking. You can simply use your foam roller to find ready relief for areas that remain stubbornly stiff in the morning, at night, in mid-day on your lunch break or before and after your WebExercises workouts.

2. Decrease muscle tension and soreness.

The journal [Physiology](#) evaluated 21 recent research studies related to use of foam rolling before and after exercise. The conclusion supported by these studies is that foam rolling is an effective way to relieve muscle soreness, tension, range of motion limitations and perception of muscle pain. Furthermore, use of foam rollers outperformed roller massages for recovering strength after an intense workout or injury. Study results particularly support use of foam rolling as a warmup and cool down before and after exercise or playing sports.

3. Heal after an injury.

Not only can foam rolling before and after a workout prevent injuries from occurring, as [Men's Health](#) advocates, but use of a foam roller can also help speed along the healing process. A big part of the reason is simply that foam rolling tells the cardiovascular system where to send oxygenated, nourishing blood that can speed away toxins and promote healing.

Foam rolling also breaks up those famous adhesions, or knots, that often form over time between the muscle and the surrounding fascia tissue. Neglected adhesions can and do get larger over time and can contribute to injuries ranging from strains and sprains to tears and even chronic disability.

Foam rolling also increases range of motion and flexibility to help your body rebound more effectively after an injury and avoid re-injury.

4. Improve your heart health.

One particularly surprising benefit you can gain from regular use of a foam roller is better cardiovascular and heart health! According to [sports science and exercise physiology researchers](#), regular proper use of a foam roller can improve two significant markers

for future cardiovascular disease: arterial stiffness and vascular endothelial function. Arterial stiffness is a known health measure of risk for a future cardiac event. The research study highlighted how self-myofascial release using a foam roller improved arterial flexibility in ways similar to how regular practitioners of yoga and other flexibility-focused exercise typically have better arterial flexibility than non-practitioners.

Vascular endothelial function is a term that refers to how well the cells lining the heart and blood vessels do their job. Their most important job is to control contraction and relaxation of the heart muscle and vessel walls. As with arterial stiffness, the researchers found that regular proper use of a foam roller improved vascular endothelial function overall and reduced the risk of a future cardiac event along with its other known benefits. This positive impact is associated with how foam rolling can improve overall blood flow and cardiovascular activity.

5. Ease chronic pain symptoms.

The key to understanding the link between foam rolling and chronic pain is to understand what can cause chronic pain in the first place. Chronic pain may be felt in one area but originate in another area. An example is chronic low back pain that is related to inflammation or adhesions (knots) in muscles somewhere else in the body, such as the neck or legs. In order to relieve this pain, it is necessary to treat the muscle group that is causing the pain being felt in the lower back. In this way, foam rolling works to ease chronic pain in the same basic way that massage therapy or chiropractic works. This is why physicians using WebExercises with their chronic pain patients also prescribe foam rolling as part of a rehabilitation plan. Interestingly, the [Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research](#) took a look at foam rolling's impact on improving blood flow to the muscles and found a positive correlation here as well. Even as foam rolling is breaking up muscle knots, it is simultaneously sending blood flow to painful areas to help detoxify and heal localized muscle injuries.

The esteemed [Cleveland Clinic](#) recommends foam rolling as a simple, effective and economical way to achieve daily relief from chronic pain symptoms.

Top 5 reasons to foam roll

1. Increase range of motion
2. Decrease muscle tension and soreness
3. Heal after an injury
4. Improve your heart health
5. Ease chronic pain symptoms



Contact me at peter@bayswater.ca if you need help with setting up your foam roller routine

Foam Roll routine

When you come in to see me for treatment I will typically look at your posture and gait, provide a treatment plan, perform the treatment and then usually send you off with a exercise program such as the one below. Today we've looked at foam rolling and how to survive without your massage so this would be a typical example of what I might you to take home. You can do this now during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you are patient of mine and need help with a foam roller routine or any exercise program you can do at home, please feel free to contact me at peter@bayswater.ca and I will do what I can with the knowledge of our treatments together. Also if there is any subject you wish me to address please send along your ideas. I've got lots of time.

These are interesting times and I can't wait to return to the office to begin Massage Therapy once again. Until then, be safe, be healthy and continue to exercise and stretch and work those muscles.

In Health,



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Rx 10181 for Roach, Peter

Rx Date 04/03/2020

Duration 2weeks

End Date 04/17/2020

Program Notes

Order	Code	Exercise Name	Sets	Reps	Time	Rest	Freq	
1	HP6109	Glute Soft Tissue Myofascial Release – Progression 1	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	
2	MB6118	Mid Back Foam Roll Myofascial Release	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	
3	SH5132	Foam Roll Chest Stretch – Progression 2	3	1	30sec	0	Daily	
4	SH5134	Child Pose with Foam Roll	3	1	30sec	0	Daily	
5	HP6110	Quadricep Foam Roll Myofascial Release	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	
6	HP6106	Iliotibial Band (ITB) Foam Roll Myofascial Release	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	
7	KN6104	Hamstring Foam Roll Myofascial Release	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	
8	KN6106	Calf Foam Roll Myofascial Release	3	1	30sec	30	Daily	

IF YOU EXPERIENCE AN EXACERBATION OR HAVE A CHANGE IN MEDICAL CONDITION,
YOU SHOULD PROMPTLY SEEK APPROPRIATE MEDICAL ADVICE.

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