

# Stretching

Adding foam rolling to your routine.

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Nutrition is an extremely important step in the recovery process following a workout or training session. Providing your muscles with the fuel they need to harness the power and energy you just put them through is critical to staying healthy and seeing the results you want. Nutrition though is not alone in the recovery process. Foam rolling is starting to become more popular as the benefits of adding a foam rolling routine to your post-workout recovery are beneficial in so many ways.

Foam rollers are cylinder shaped pieces of foam that are pretty firm. They can be purchased online or in most major sports retailers, and even some stores like Target carry them in their sporting goods section. You can also usually find them on the fitness floor at your gym if you want to add it to your gym routine or try one out before bringing it home.

Foam rolling essentially is giving yourself a deep tissue massage, who wouldn't love that! You work different areas of your body, both upper and lower body, looking for tense spots so that you can break up scar tissue which will increase mobility, decrease potential for injury, and help heal current injuries. It is especially helpful for specific muscles that are challenging to stretch, like IT bands and hips.



Ideally, you should foam roll several times a week if you are an active person. Spend about 30 seconds per muscle and increase that time for areas where you experience tightness and pain. You should be cautioned though that you may experience some pain or discomfort while foam rolling, especially when you hit any tight spots.

Foam rolling not only stretches muscles and tendons but it also breaks down soft tissue adhesions and scar tissue. By

using your own body weight and a cylindrical foam roller you can perform a self-massage or myofascial release, break up trigger points, and soothe tight fascia while increasing blood flow and circulation to the soft tissues.

Here are some specific tips to help you get started foam rolling:

- Perform foam roller sessions when your muscles are warm, so after a workout
- Position the roller under the soft tissue area you want to release or loosen.
- Gently roll your body weight back and forth across the roller while targeting the affected muscle.
- Move slowly and work from the center of the body out toward your extremities.
- If you find a particularly painful area, hold that position until the area softens.
- Focus on areas that are tight or have reduced range of motion.
- Roll over each area a few times until you feel it relax. Expect some discomfort. It may feel very tender or bruised at first.
- Stay on soft tissue and avoid rolling directly over bone or joints.
- Drink plenty of water after a session, just as you would after a sports massage.

Of course, keep the nutrition aspect of recovery going by replenishing lost electrolytes, carbohydrates, and proteins. You can multi-task by grabbing a smoothie to sip post-workout while you foam roll!

*Kimberly is the Head Women's Volleyball Coach at Chestnut Hill College, located in Philadelphia PA. She also coaches high school athletes who compete on travel volleyball teams. She has worked with numerous athletes of various ages and levels to help them achieve their maximum potential. When not helping and teaching others as a coach, she enjoys challenging herself in the gym and looks forward to a Java Jolt smoothie after a good work out!*

