

Active Health Solutions

Foam Roller – Thoracic Spine



Why Use a Foam Roller?

You can use the foam roller to provide self-soft-tissue-mobilization (SSTM) on yourself. Benefits of SSTM include: improving muscle flexibility, decreasing tension, decreasing lactic acid, decreasing muscle fibrosis, and decreasing the risk for injury. By using your body weight you will put pressure through your muscles in order to regulate areas of increased muscle tone or tightness.

How to Use a Foam Roller

It is important NOT to roll over bony areas (like your knee) or areas where you have an open wound or injury. Always roll in line with the muscles and at a SLOW PACE. When you roll over a tight area or muscle knot, slow down your speed and rest on top of this area for 20-30 seconds or until you feel the area release. If it is too painful to stay on top of this area, decrease the force by take some weight off of the area. When you are finished rolling, make sure that you drink plenty of water, just like you would after a massage. Use the foam roller as described at your own risk.

Thoracic Spine Foam Roller Instructions

While performing any of the thoracic spine foam roller exercises, always keep your abdominal muscles lightly contracted. Always maintain a neutral spine in your neck and lower back, avoiding any arching that may occur.



Extension

With the foam roller placed horizontally, lay on the roller at shoulder blade level, clasp your hands behind your head and bring your elbows out to the side, supporting your head and neck. Keep your head and neck in line with the spine, a neutral position, your eyes towards the ceiling, and bottom on the floor. Gently stretch back for a few seconds, then return to neutral. Repeat 5-10 times, then roll down to the second level and repeat the stretch. Repeat until you are at the bottom of your rib cage (NOT THE LOW BACK).



Reaching Overhead

Lying lengthwise on the foam roller, clasp your hands together in front of you, above your chest with arms straight. Slowly move your arms above your head until you feel a good stretch. This exercise should be PAIN FREE. Hold stretch for 30-60 seconds.



Opposite Arm Reach

Lying lengthwise on the foam roller, reach your hands in opposite directions, one towards your feet and the other above your head, parallel to the ground. Alternate, keeping arms straight. This should be PAIN FREE. Perform each reach 10 times per direction, with a slight pause on each side.



Thoracic Spine and Pectoralis Stretch

Lying lengthwise on the foam roller with your buttocks and head supported, bring your arms out to the side forming a “T” shape with the body with palms facing the ceiling. Gently rest your arms to the ground and hold the stretch for 60 seconds. If the stretch is too intense, place towels or pillows under the hands so that the stretch is more comfortable. This exercise should be PAIN FREE.



Thoracic Spine and Shoulder ROM - Snow Angels

Lying vertically on the foam roller, move arms like a “snow angel,” trying to keep your hands touching the ground. When you cannot keep your hands on the ground, gently move your hands back to where you can



Trapezoid Stretch

Lying on the foam roller vertically, clasp your forearms together or straighten your arms out at shoulder height. As you roll your body to the right, your arms go to the left (your head and shoulder follow your arms). This motion should make a “trapezoid” shape with your arms. Repeat to the opposite direction. You can hold the stretch as you alternate back and forth. This exercise should be PAIN FREE.



Thoracic Spine- Rotation

Lying on the foam roller vertically, clasp your arms with each hand grabbing the inside of the elbow. Slowly move your arms to the right or left, maintain the shape of a square with your arms. Your head should follow your arms. Repeat in the opposite direction.