

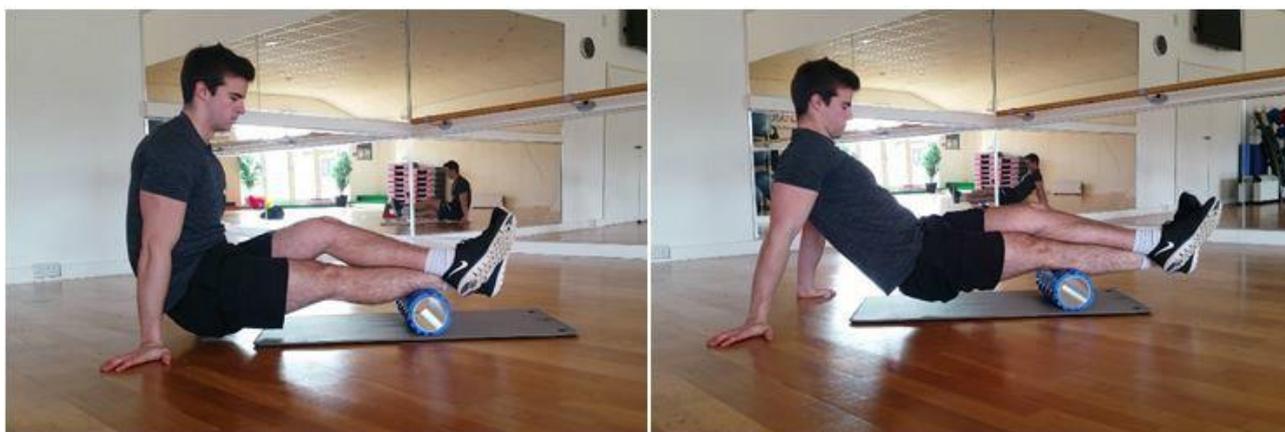
## Form roller routine

For all exercises, you should roll the full length of the muscle, in the same direction of the muscle fibres. If you reach an area of tenderness, keep the pressure on it for around 30 seconds, and then continue to roll the length of the muscle.

### **Calves**

Your calves are made up of two separate muscles – your soleus, and your gastrocnemius.

The muscle fibres run from the knee to ankle, and you can target the muscle from different angles by simply turning your toes in or out.



- ✓ To increase pressure, you can place one leg on top of the one you are rolling as shown in the photo, whereas to reduce pressure, you can place your foot on the floor next to the leg being rolled.

### **Tibialis Anterior**

The tibialis anterior muscle is on the front of the lower leg, and is responsible for movements pulling your toes up. Again the muscles fibres run from the knee to the ankle, so you should roll in the same direction. As this is a relatively long and thin muscle, it may be better rolled using a lacrosse ball rather than a foam roller



- ✓ When foam rolling, it is advisable to avoid bony areas, so for this exercise rather than rolling over your shin bones, you should rotate your toes in slightly, so you are rolling over the more fleshy, outer part of your shin.

### **Quadriceps**

To help improve quad range of movement before a big leg day, you can spend a few minutes rolling out your quads before you start.

The muscles fibres run from the hip down to below the knee so the direction of foam rolling should replicate this.





- ✓ Support your body with your elbows on the floor, and with the opposite leg out to the side to help with the rolling movement.
- ✓ To increase pressure you can stack your legs on top of each other.

As the quads are made up of four different muscles, you can rotate your body to target each muscle, with the vastus lateralis on the outside, rectus femoris down the middle, which sits on top of the vastus intermedius, and then the vastus medialis on the inside.

### Hamstrings

The hamstrings are made up of three muscles that run down the back of your leg from the bottom of your hip, down to just below your knee joint.



- ✓ Rotating your leg during rolling can help to hit your semitendinosus on the outside of your leg, the biceps femoris down the middle, and the semimembranosus towards the inside of your leg.
- ✓ Again, to increase pressure, you can stack your legs on top of each other, and to reduce pressure you should support more weight through your upper body.

### Adductors

There are a handful of muscles located on the inside of your upper leg known as the adductors, responsible for movements that bring your legs together (hip adduction).

Although this isn't the most flattering position to be foam rolling, tight adductors can cause your knee to cave inwards during squats, and may result in knee pain in the long-term so it is worth investing time to tease out any trigger points.





- ✓ Position yourself face-down, with the leg to be rolled out to one side, and supporting your upper body using your hands or elbows. The contact should be on your inner thigh, and from the hip down to the knee and back.

### IT Band

The Iliotibial (IT) Band is a long ligament that runs on the outside of your leg, from the front of your hip right down to below your knee.

A tight IT band is common as a result of overuse, and can cause knee pain. At the top of this ligament is a muscle known as the tensor fasciae latae (TFL), and trigger points here are frequently the cause of tight IT bands.



- ✓ Focus on any trigger points in the TFL is just as effective. To roll over the TFL, lie on your side, with the foam roller under your hip, and to increase stability you can bring your opposite leg over, as shown in the photo.

### Piriformis

The piriformis is a small muscle at the back of the hip, connecting the bottom of the spine with the top of the femur. The piriformis is responsible for external rotation of the hip,





- ✓ In order to foam roll it, you should internally rotate your hip as shown in the photo, with the foot of the leg to be rolled placed by the knee on the opposite leg.
- ✓ Due to its location, a tight piriformis can irritate the nearby sciatic nerve, which may cause pain or tingling down the length of the leg, so it is worthwhile taking some time to check the piriformis for trigger points.

Again as this is a small muscle, a lacrosse ball may be a better way to pinpoint the pressure applied.

### Upper Back

There are a lot of muscles in your upper back, ranging from your traps which are the closest to the surface, through to rotator cuffs which are relatively deep in the structure.



- ✓ Place the foam roller under your upper back, and roll from your upper traps, down to the bottom of you thoracic spine. Foam rolling your lower back can put an increased curve in your lumbar spine, so it is advisable to limit foam rolling to just your upper back.
- ✓ Cross your arms over your chest to help protract your shoulder blades and allow the foam roller to put pressure on muscles rather than bones.
- ✓ Keep weight through your feet rather than letting your hips rest on the floor, as again this can increase spinal curves.

If you want to target particular muscle groups such as your traps, then depending on the direction of the muscle fibres, you may need to roll across your back rather than up and down.



## Latissimus Dorsi (Lats)

Your lats are another large muscle in your back which is worth rolling out before a session. The latissimus dorsi originates on the lower to mid-spine, and runs under your armpit to attach to the front of your humerus.



- ✓ To use a foam roller on this muscle, lie on your side and raise one arm out to the side, with the foam roller under your armpit, and push through your legs to roll the length of the muscle.
- ✓ To make contact with different angles, you can simply turn your body so you are closer to lying on your back, which will help with release of more posterior fascia.
- ✓ To reduce pressure, allow your hips to rest on the floor, and to increase pressure, lift your hips up higher.

## Take Home Message

Foam rolling is expected to be uncomfortable but not painful, you can increase or decrease pressure accordingly by supporting your bodyweight through your arms and legs.

Rather than rolling the same length of muscle over and over again, you should rotate your body so you can apply pressure at different angles.

- ✓ If you reach a trigger point, which is characterised by tenderness, then maintain pressure on this point for around 30 seconds, and then continue to roll the length of the muscle.
- ✓ Foam rolling before a workout is shown to increase range of movement, whereas integrating it after a workout can help to reduce muscle soreness following the workout!

