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ROCK 'N' ROLLER

Increase your flexibility with a foam roller

The foam roller is a great tool for helping to maintain flexibility and spinal mobility. Each muscle is surrounded by a connective tissue sheath that, over time, can become tight. This can make usual stretching exercises ineffective. Using the roller helps to loosen the connective tissue, allowing the muscle to stretch out further helping you become limber. Furthermore, the roller makes a great tool for stretching the upper spine, which often becomes stiff and hunched as gravity takes its toll.

1 ITB release

1

This technique is helpful in staving off stiffness-related knee pain, and makes your hips more flexible. Lay on your side with the roller at your hip. Using your opposite foot for support, roll down the side of your leg to just above your knee, then back to the hip. This may be painful to start with, but over time the discomfort will diminish. Perform 5-10 rolls on each leg.



2 Rectus femoris release

2

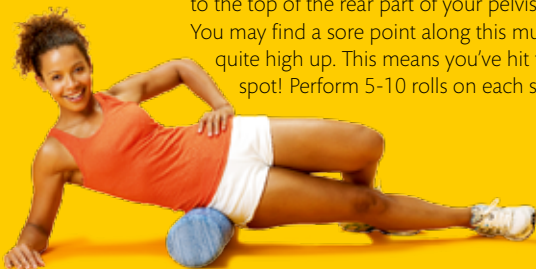
Now lay with the roller at the top of one thigh and roll between the knee and the hip at the front of your thigh. This muscle is a two joint muscle that both flexes the hip and straightens the knee. Tightness over the knee can contribute to knee pain, and tightness over the hip can contribute to back pain. Perform 5-10 rolls on each side.



3 Piriformis release squats

3

In the side of your hip/bum area is a muscle called the piriformis that is often implicated in lower back and hip pain. Keeping this muscle loose will again make your hips more flexible, and back pain less likely. Lay on your side with the roller at your hip, but this time angle yourself diagonally upwards and roll from the middle/side of your bum to the top of the rear part of your pelvis. You may find a sore point along this muscle quite high up. This means you've hit the spot! Perform 5-10 rolls on each side.



4

4 Thoracic stretch

The upper spine is prone to stiffness, and over time often loses its range of movement into extension. This in turn contributes to neck, upper back, lower back and shoulder pain. Lay with the roller positioned across your upper back, support your head with your hands and stretch backwards. Make sure you keep your tummy muscles engaged and ribs pulled in to prevent you from arching the lower back instead of the upper back. Hold this position for 1-2 minutes making sure you support your head to prevent neck ache. You may feel taller and more upright after performing this stretch.



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