Foam Rolling 101

Though the technical term is long—myofascial release!—this flexibility component is my favourite addition to a warm up or cool down. It’s like a DIY massage!

**How it works**

When you’re foam rolling, you’re easing the tension in the muscle fibres by putting pressure on them. Essentially, your muscles should feel looser after rolling, which will increase your flexibility and help you get stronger without injury.

**For your legs**

Place the foam roller of your choice (see below) on the ground and arrange yourself so that the muscle you want to massage is lying on the roller (see beside). Put as much weight as you can on that leg, and *slowly* roll up and down the muscle. **Discomfort/pain is normal and to be expected.**

**Here’s the trick:** pause when you roll over a particularly painful spot. Hold your position for 30s to really make a difference deep down in the tissue.

**For your upper back, shoulders, and arms**

Use a tennis ball or softball instead to get the smaller muscles of your upper body. It’s much of the same technique, except you roll the ball between yourself and the wall instead of the floor. It’s good for getting those hard-to-reach places, like under your shoulder blades!

**Don’t roll over joints or bony parts!** It will hurt a *lot*, and it won’t help any.

**Where to get a foam roller**

Many gyms will have foam rollers! Any sports store should have them if you want to buy them, but you can also order them over the internet. They come in different sizes and levels of firmness, so if you’re unsure of what’s best for you, ask! You shouldn’t spend more than $45 on a roller, especially if you’re new to it.