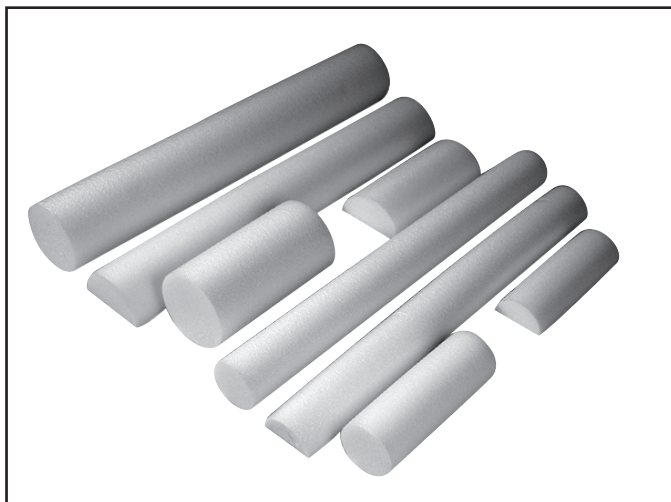


Roll Away the Tension

It would be great to offer all of your gymnasts a massage before and after practice, but that would be impractical and costly. The biofoam roller is a great way to provide your athletes with self massage/tissue tension relief. This article will discuss the use and benefits of the biofoam roller for that purpose.



The biofoam roller is a lightweight cylindrical foam "tube" designed to help with decreasing tissue tension and improving flexibility. It can also be used for balance and strength training exercises. The benefits of using the roller are: easy to use, self directed, inexpensive, decreases tissue tension, increases blood flow, prepares muscles for activity and enhances recovery afterwards. (The biofoam roller can be purchased at the following web sites: Performbetter.com or Power-systems.com.)



Cervical/Thoracic/Lumbar

Using the foam roller prior to exercise or practice is a great way to warm up and prepare the muscles for the work that lies ahead. Often times, due to stress and physical activity, muscles "hold" tension and develop "knots" within the muscle fibers. These "knots" and the build



Hamstring

up of tension can interfere with the muscles ability to fire properly. Ultimately, this can contribute to decreased performance and increased risk of injury. A good analogy to think of in using the foam roller is a wrinkled shirt. If you pull or stretch the shirt the wrinkles may disappear but return as soon as you release the stretch. On the other hand, if you apply pressure and heat (ironing) the wrinkles are eliminated. So, think of it as "ironing" the muscles. There are basically two ways to apply their use. Simply roll back and forth over



Piriformis/Buttock

a muscle for a desired number of reps or time, or you can slowly roll over the muscle and when you hit a tender spot hold the pressure on that spot until it dissipates working your way along the muscle. Initially some of the muscles will be noticeably "uncomfortable," but as you continue to use the biofoam roller and release the tension and knots it will become more comfortable. You will notice that certain muscles will always seem to be more tender. Those muscles



IT Band (lat thigh)

may be subjected to more stress due to muscle imbalances and/or compensations. After the workout, the biofoam roller will help to dissipate tissue tension from the workout and enhance blood flow to promote recovery. Proper hydration and nutrition further enhance the training and recovery effect. Pictured are a few examples of the major areas to target.



Post Shoulder/Lats

Position self on roller for specific muscle. Slowly roll up and down muscle without going over the knee joint for given number of reps or time. A good number is 1-2 sets of 15 reps; this number works well and should be completed in just a few minutes. Use the foam roll first, followed by an active warm-up, and then proceed into practice. It's preferable to static stretch after practice, based on results from several research studies showing that static stretching is detrimental to strength and power. Here is another tip—buy the 3-foot rollers and cut them in half to double your supply. This length is more than enough and actually works well with the smaller athlete. Enjoy and “just roll with it.”



Quadriceps

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