

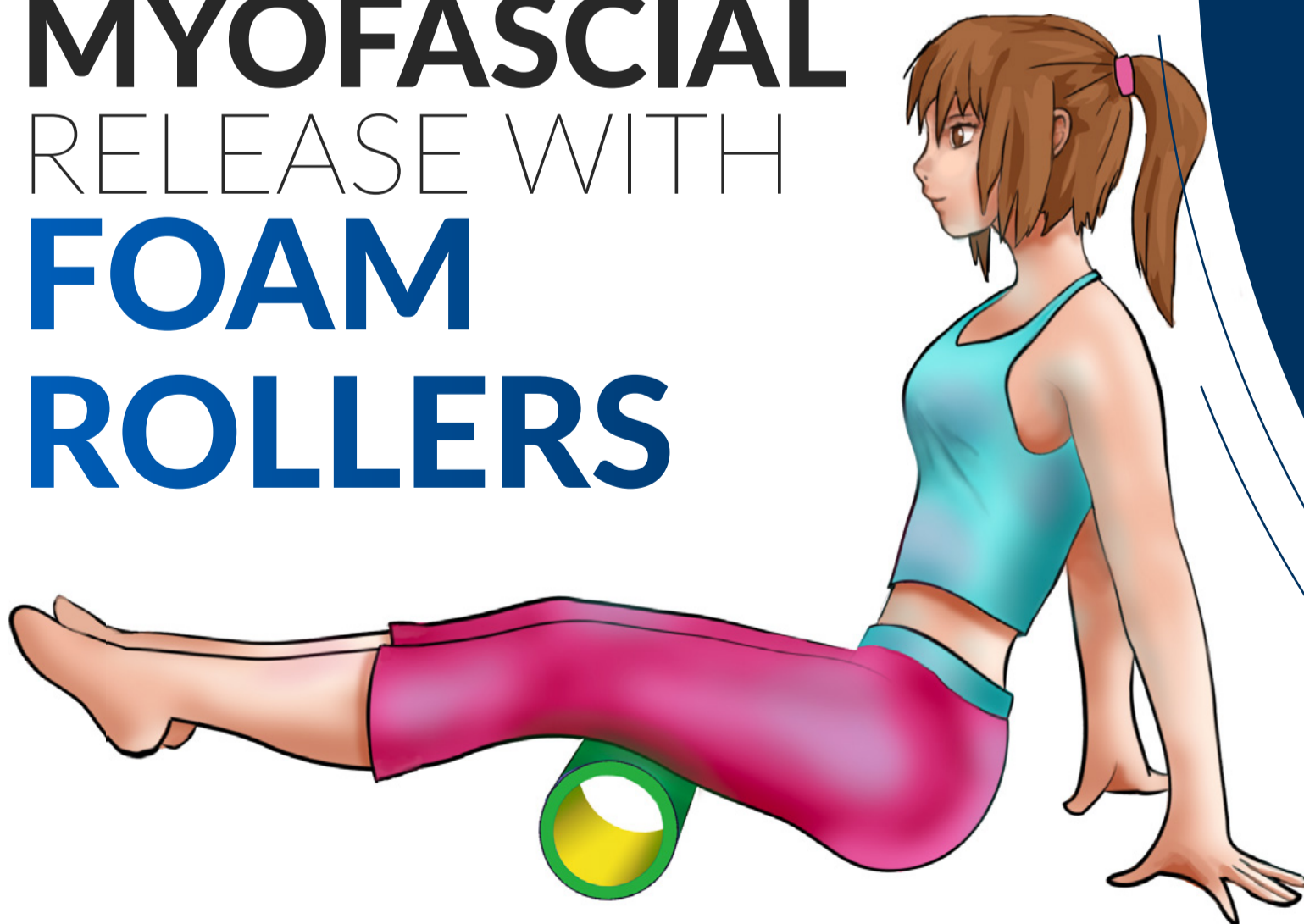


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SPIRIT **4** SPORT

SELF MYOFASCIAL RELEASE WITH **FOAM ROLLERS**



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The authors assume no liability for any injury; this manual is a purely educational guide for those already conversant with the rigorous demands of this kind of programming.

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INTRODUCTION



Foam rollers were once used exclusively by professional trainers and athletes, but times have changed. Today, you can walk into a great deal of training facilities and see people ranging from elite athletes right through to weekend warriors using foam rollers as an element of their exercise regime. Self-myofascial release (hereafter referred to as SMR) or, as it is more commonly known, foam roller exercise, is a great way of relieving pain, releasing tension from cramped muscles and addressing 'trigger points' within these muscles to help loosen them up and avoid further discomfort.

SMR with foam rollers offers a convenient, effective and inexpensive way of reducing both adhesion and accumulation of scar tissue, as well as eliminating already present issues on a daily basis. Although acute benefits will definitely be noticed, it should be noted that like stretching, foam rolling will not provide marked improvements overnight. To see positive, long term results, it is necessary to be diligent in your approach and stick to the regime.

Most training requires rationalized progression in order to provide continued progress. SMR with foam rollers is no exception to this rule, and there are multiple techniques for changing pressure, density and other related factors to get the best results for your money.

WHY IT WORKS?



Basically, SMR with foam rollers offers many of the benefits provided by stretching and more. The fact that muscles have to be both strong and pliable is fairly well accepted. Whether you are an ordinary weekend warrior, a strength athlete or a bodybuilder, strength and optimal function throughout your full range of movement are of utmost importance. While stretching improves muscle length, SMR and massage aid in adjusting muscle tone.

Traditional stretching techniques will simply result in a transitory muscle length increase (assuming you do not exceed your stress-strain curve's "point of no return", which could lead to undesirable deformities). SMR not only offers these benefits, but also a breakdown of scar tissue and soft tissue adhesions.



WHEN TO USE?



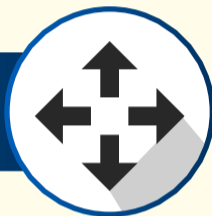
WARM-UP

Using a foam roller increases blood flow and releases muscle tension likely to inhibit your true exercise form.

POST WORKOUT

Using a foam roller after arduous workouts assists in flushing out any toxins within your muscles and subsequently aids muscle recovery.

POSITIONING



Unlike other fitness regimes, users will place themselves in varying positions atop the roller, using their own bodyweight to work on, or “massage” a very specific area. In order to restore functionality and elasticity, pressure must be applied to a precise point on the body.

There are several reasons why correct positioning is critical while using a foam roller:

01

Poor alignment could stress supporting joints and/or muscles

02

Improper placement could cause excessive pressure on the area to be trained and diminish compliance (You will not want to keep doing it if it hurts way too much!)

03

Improper placement could result in excessive fatigue of supporting musculature

Proper positioning and alignment for specific drills will be covered later.

DURATION



Generally speaking, how much time is required to get the full benefits directly depends on the current quality of your tissue. In other words, terrible tissue quality or unfamiliarity with this type of exercise will necessitate more work in order to bring you up to par. Increasing familiarity with the techniques, on the other hand, will not only make things easier, but will also mean time needed on the roller will decrease.

A general rule of thumb, however, is not to exceed a couple of minutes of foam roller use on one part of the body at a time. For tender muscles/joints, the foam roller should only be used for approximately 30 seconds before moving on to another body part.

SAFETY



While SMR is both safe and effective for the majority of the population, there are a few safety concerns that must be addressed:

- Pressure should not be applied to recently injured areas or bony prominences
- Individuals with chronic pain or circulatory issues should never use these techniques unless approval to do so has been given by their doctor

Following these safety tips will help to prevent injuries:

- If you suffer from chronic pain conditions (like fibromyalgia, for instance), avoid use of foam rollers
- Never roll directly on painful/sore joints and muscles
- Never roll on recently injured areas, as this can result in further inflammation. In a similar fashion, focusing for too long on a single spot can also contribute to an increase in tension.



- Never directly position joints over a foam roller. All of the exercises are designed to relieve pain within muscles and surrounding tissue (fascia), rather than joints themselves.
- Avoid rolling too fast
- Do not work on muscle knots for more than a couple of minutes
- Be sure to maintain a good posture and keep abdominal muscles tight

Finally, never place your lower back directly atop the foam roller, as this:

- Will cause muscles to contract in order to protect the spine and subsequently increase tension
- Is counter-productive and likely to cause injury

Instead, remain safe by using the foam roller on muscles/joints connecting to your back, while avoiding direct contact between the roller and your lower back.

As the rollers consist of high-impact foam, some pain is naturally involved (similar to the pain typically associated with deep-tissue massages). Know that for the first few times, use will generally be quite uncomfortable! It is highly important here to note that while some discomfort is to be expected and perfectly natural, movements causing severe pain must be avoided.



BENEFITS



Regularly practised, foam roller exercises can improve muscle elasticity and aid recovery from injury.

Here are a few key reasons for including SMR techniques in your regular training regime:

Increased muscle elasticity and aid in recovery from injuries	Reduction of adhesions and scar tissue	Improved removal of toxins
Improved mobility/range of motion	Improved quality/range of movement	Rehabilitation and pain relief after injuries
Decrease in overactive muscles' tone	Anti-cellulite effect	

Furthermore, foam rollers are great for filling in the gaps between deep tissue massage and/or hands-on ART sessions.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS



These exercises may be performed individually or combined into pre/post workout routines of approximately 10 to 15 minutes. As roller exercises are best performed once muscles are warm, a quick warm-up (five minutes) is necessary if intending to perform them immediately before weight-training sessions.

Best done carefully and slowly, use of a foam roller is the way to scan your body's most effective trigger points. On starting the exercise, take note of any dense, tender and sore feeling areas. Once you have located these areas, pause at these points of your body and allow the roller to deeply sink into your skin to feel your muscles begin to loosen up and pain to reduce and dissipate.

Roll slowly back and forth for between 20 and 30 seconds as described for each exercise before proceeding to the next one. Take slow, deep breaths as you roll to assist your muscles to relax. Never roll onto your joints - your roller should at all times remain positioned underneath your muscles. Should you hit a particularly tender or tight spot, cease rolling and instead apply direct pressure to the spot until the pain diminishes (or for up to 30 seconds).

As a newcomer to foam rolling, you should incorporate this sequence of moves into your exercise routine only every other day for around two or three weeks. Following this, you can try using the sequence once or twice a day, both before and straight after your workouts.

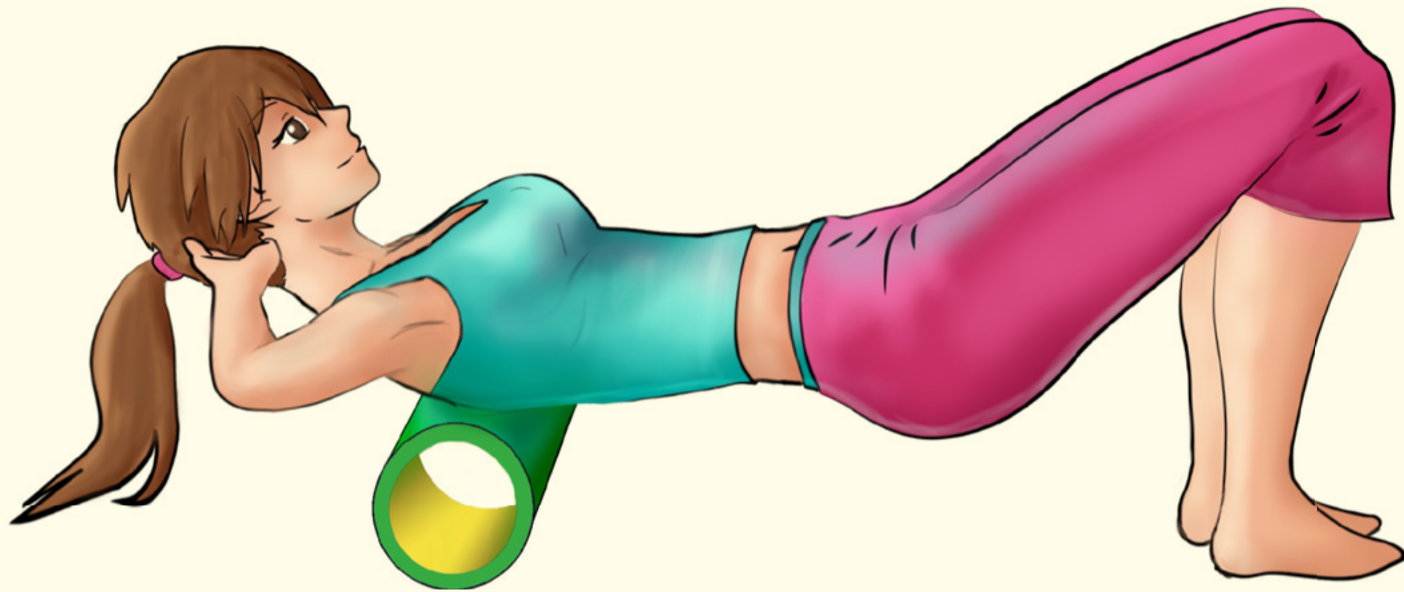
In time, you may wish to increase force. There are several ways of achieving this:

- If both of your legs are on the roller, try taking one leg off
- Try, if possible, stacking one leg on the other
- If, for stability purposes, you have a foot/hand on the ground, take it off the ground to place more of your body's weight onto the area you are rolling

Now, let's take a look at 10 very effective foam rolling exercises.

FOAM ROLLER EXERCISES

THE UPPER BACK ROLL



This exercise is designed to target upper back muscles like the rear deltoids and the trapezius. Lie down on the roller with your upper back resting on it. Either placing your hands behind the head or crossing your arms in front of the chest, shift your hips to raise them off the ground. Use your feet to slowly roll your body to and fro, with the roller stopping at the middle back before returning up to just below the neck. Each set should last for approximately 30 seconds.

Reasons to Treat:

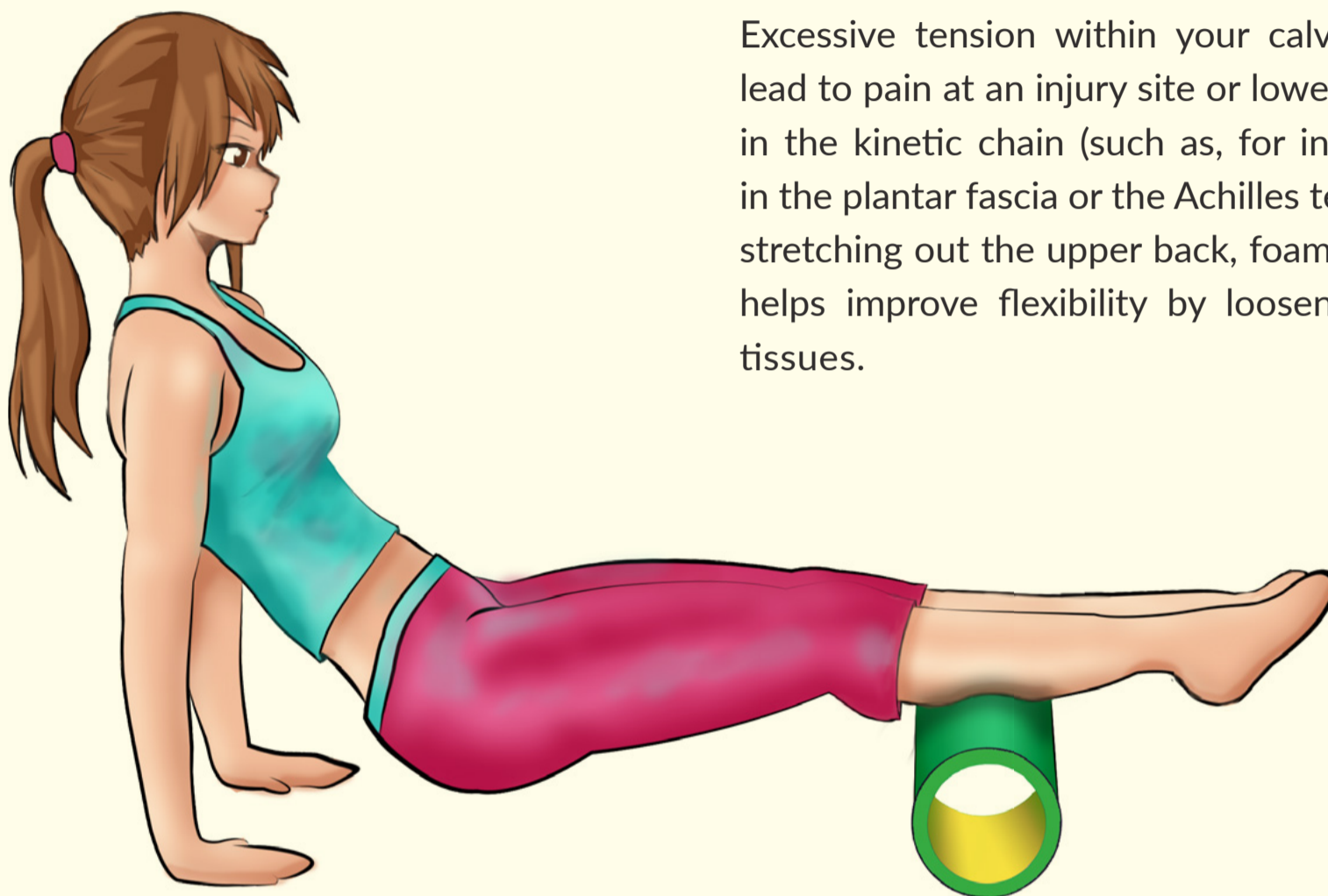
Fairly common, poor spine mobility can cause tension within the neck and shoulders, as well as the lower back and hips. Unless addressed by massage and stretching, this tension can lead to aches, pain and bad

posture. An easy way of stretching out the upper back, foam rolling helps improve flexibility by loosening up tissues.

Tip:

As you roll, avoid looking at your legs by tilting your head forward, as this may place excessive stress onto the spine. Both your head and your neck should always be kept aligned with your back. Practising this exercise requires proper core muscles and can be fostered by straining of your abdominal muscles and inward-tilting of your hip. Middle-aged individuals must use appropriate caution when starting this exercise, as core muscle weakness may cause some lower back pain and/or tightness within the hamstrings.

CALF ROLLS



Reasons to Treat:

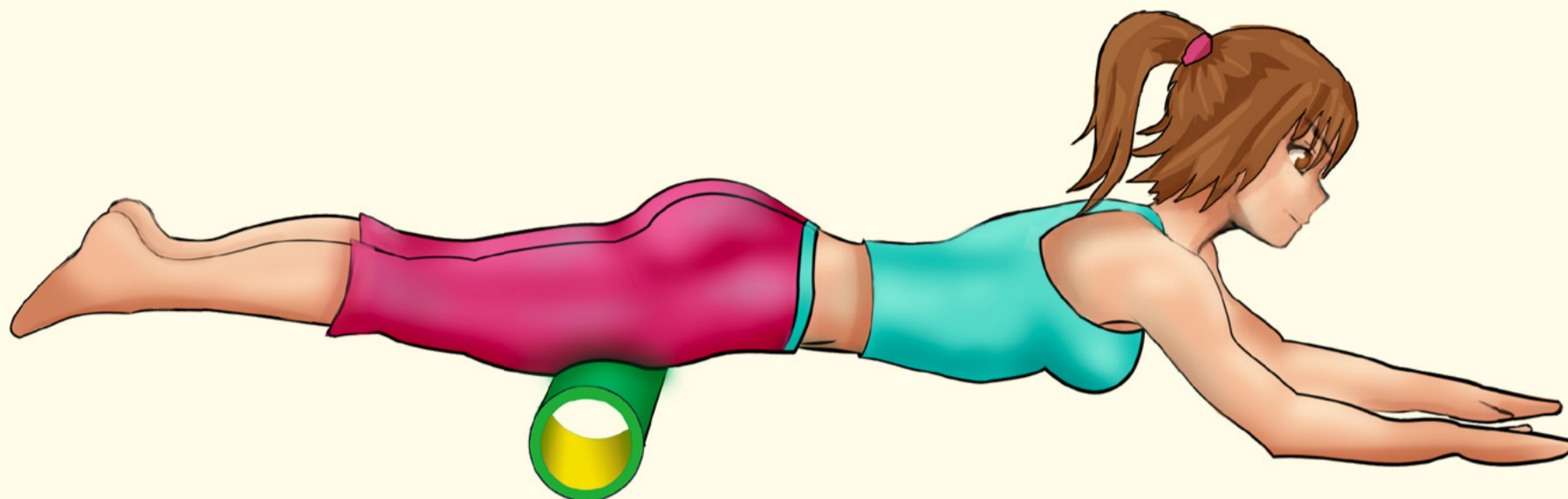
Excessive tension within your calves can lead to pain at an injury site or lower down in the kinetic chain (such as, for instance, in the plantar fascia or the Achilles tendon). stretching out the upper back, foam rolling helps improve flexibility by loosening up tissues.

Placing the roller below one leg (at the point where your calf muscle meets your knee's back), use your other leg to support some of your body's weight. Again lifting your hips off the ground, place stress onto the leg on the roller and move your body to and fro with the other leg, allowing the roller to move from the calf muscle's top down to just above the place where it meets your ankle and back again. Repeat this exercise for 30 seconds for each leg.

Tip:

To increase intensity, perform the move a side at a time by stacking one leg on top of the other. Change the move's emphasis by turning your feet out or in while rolling.

QUADRICEPS ROLLS



Lying on your stomach with the roller between the floor and where your upper thighs meet your frontal hips, keep your forearms flat on the floor in front of your body to support its upper weight. Use them as a base and rock slowly back and forth, allowing the roller to move down to slightly above your knee. Please note that during the entire move, your feet should equally be suspended off the ground. Keeping abdominal muscles tight and your back straight throughout the movement, roll to and fro between 30 and 60 seconds.

Reasons to Treat:

Excessive tension within your quadriceps, (which is often overused as a result of psoas and/or gluteals not functioning properly) could cause anterior knee pain.

Tip:

To increase intensity and really work on that ache, try rolling a quad a time by stacking your feet. Try to reach every one of your quadriceps' four heads by maintaining a straddle and rotating your body during rolling. On strained quadriceps, roll cautiously and, if pain increases, ease the strong tone by performing normal stretching exercises before rolling. Target sore areas specifically or, if you have no particularly sore areas, roll out the entire upper leg.

ILIOTIBIAL (IT) BAND ROLLS



A popular exercise for targeting the area where the leg's outer portion meets the hip, this exercise requires you to lie down with the roller between the ground and your outer (upper) leg. Crossing the other leg at the knee in front of this supporting leg, keep the lower leg's foot on the ground. Prop yourself up with both arms, then proceed to move so the roller moves down to a little above your outer knee, then roll back to your starting position. Repeat this movement for around 30 seconds, then switch to your other leg.

Tip:

If loosening things up requires more pressure, try stacking your legs. Bear in mind, though, that this will challenge your stability. It is, however, important to begin light and only apply more weight gradually, as it begins to feel more comfortable. Roll-till up to your knee joint/s (but never onto it/them!), rotating your leg while performing this exercise.

Reasons to Treat:

The IT or iliotibial band is frequently excessively tight. This can cause lateral knee pain by pulling the knee out of position and causing swelling and pain in the joint. Massaging your iliotibial band with the foam roller is highly effective in alleviating this pain. Considered to potentially be among the most painful exercises, it is nonetheless strongly recommended for both runners and office employees sitting the best part of their working day.

GLUTEUS ROLLS



Please note: If you experience trouble supporting yourself working on one side, the same motion can also be used simultaneously on both sides.

Remaining seated with straight legs, place the foam roller directly under your gluteus muscles. Bend one of your legs at the knee, then pivot slightly, placing most of your weight onto your opposite gluteus muscle. Position your arms for support (behind you) and slowly roll to and fro. The range of this motion is quite limited and should end once the roller reaches where the gluteus and your upper hamstring meet.

Reasons to Treat:

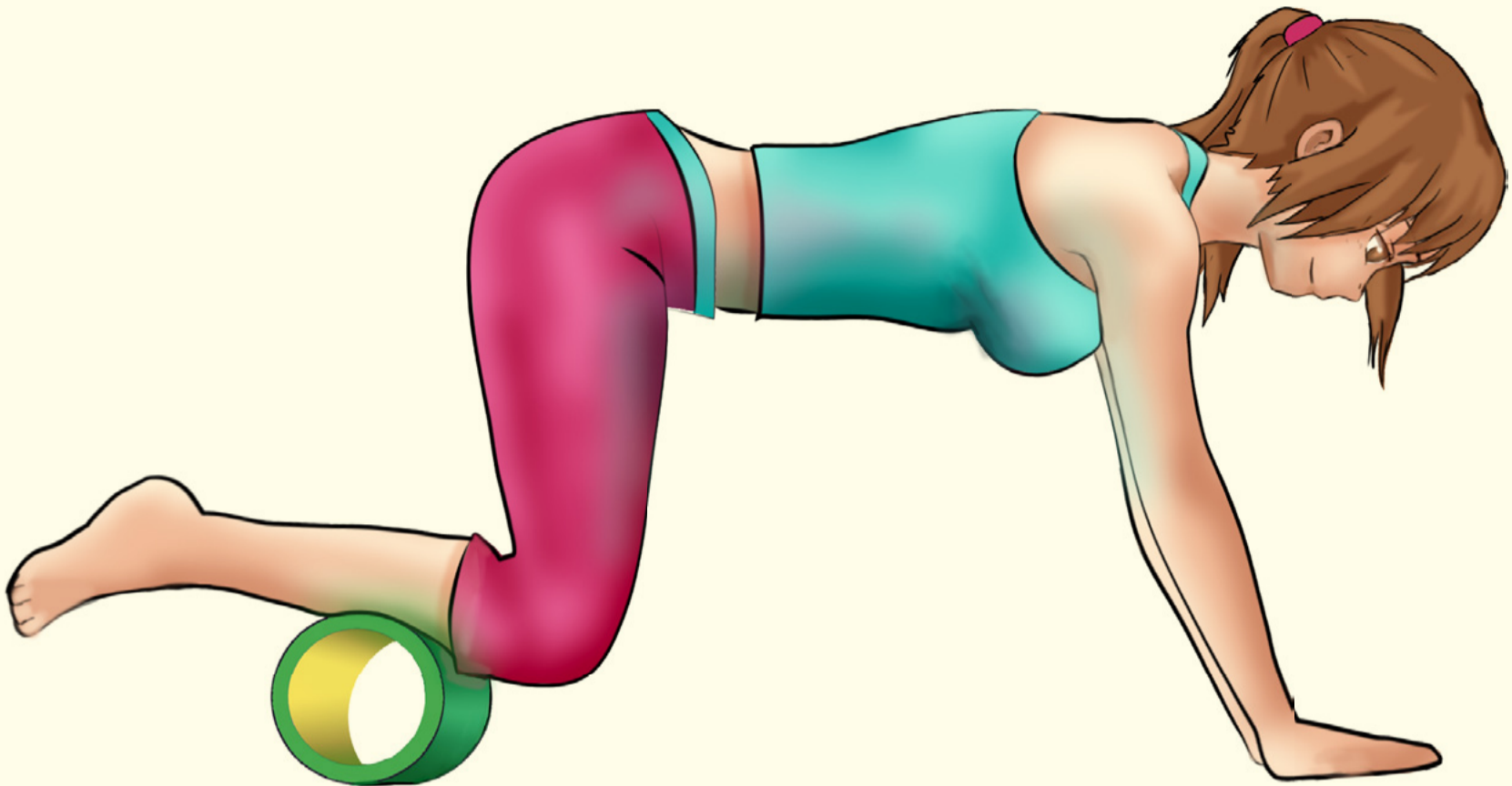
Disproportionate stiffness in comparison to your lumbar spine has the potential to force

your body into lumbar flexion complete with increasing hip flexion. In addition, excessive tension within your gluteus maximus could cause lateral knee pain through the IT band. **Warning:** Individuals with sciatic nerve inflammation (sciatica) or spinal problems must avoid this exercise.

Tip:

Pressing through your palms, shift back and forth by moving through your shoulders.

SHIN ROLLS



This exercise is commonly used by runners who may suffer from shin splints. Face the floor and bend your knees 90 degrees. Place the foam roller at your shins' top (where they are met by the knees). Supporting your upper body by propping your arms at a 90 degree angle to the ground, gently roll to and fro until the roller moves down to a little above your ankle, then return to your starting position. Repeat this movement (like other exercises) for 30 seconds. As rolling directly onto your knees could exacerbate existing injuries, make sure to avoid this.

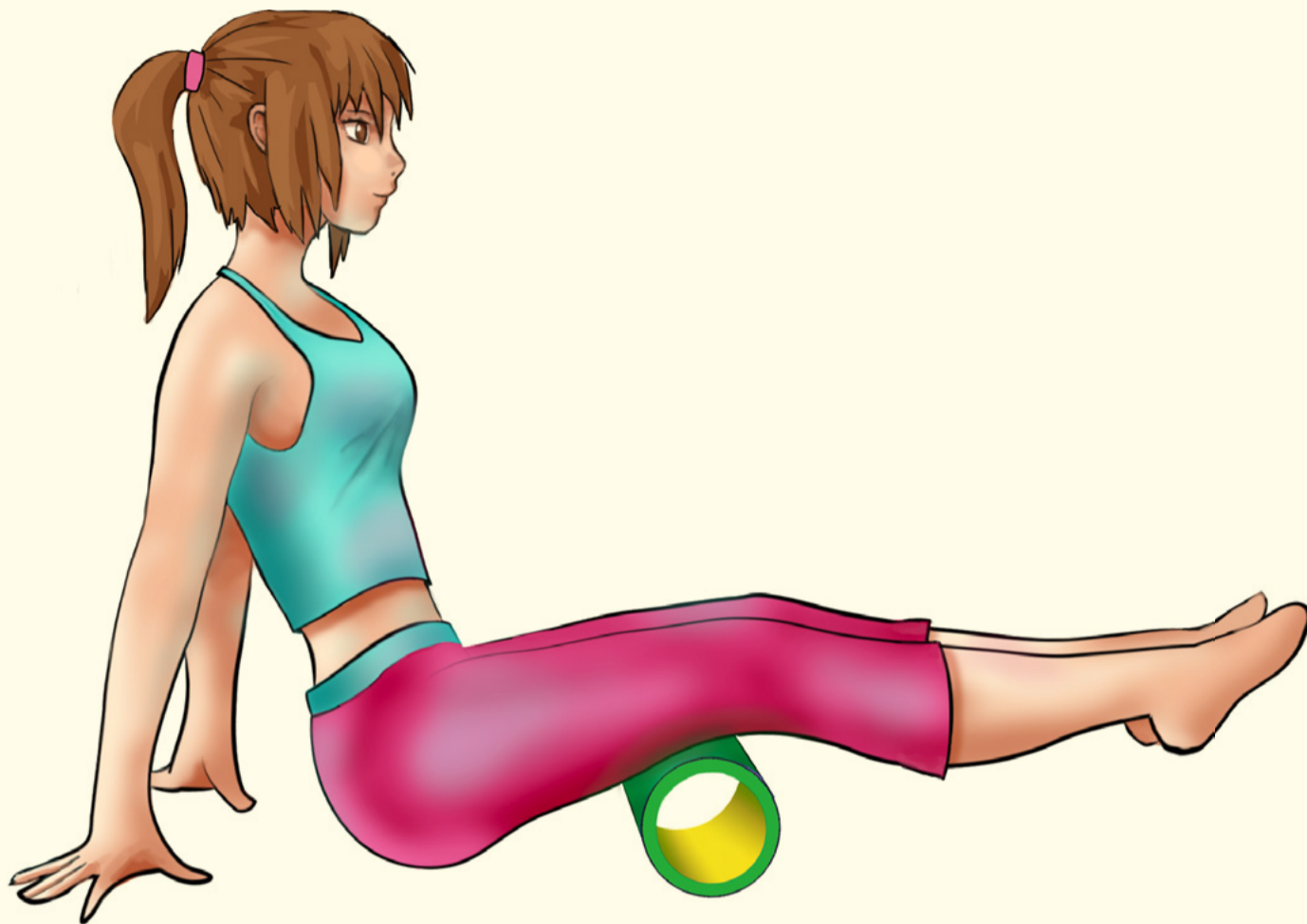
Reasons to Treat:

This exercise is highly recommended for runners.

Tip:

Rolling directly onto the knees could exacerbate existing injuries and/or cause discomfort. Proper core muscles are necessary to practise this exercise. roll out the entire upper leg.

HAMSTRING ROLLS



Sitting on the floor, place the roller beneath the backs of your knees and, once again, prop up your body with your arms while performing this exercise. Take care not to completely lock out your elbows, as this could result in joint problems. Placing your legs' weight solely onto the roller and keeping your feet off the floor, move gently back and forth, allowing the roller to descend to a little below where your gluteus muscles meet your upper hamstrings before returning to your starting position.

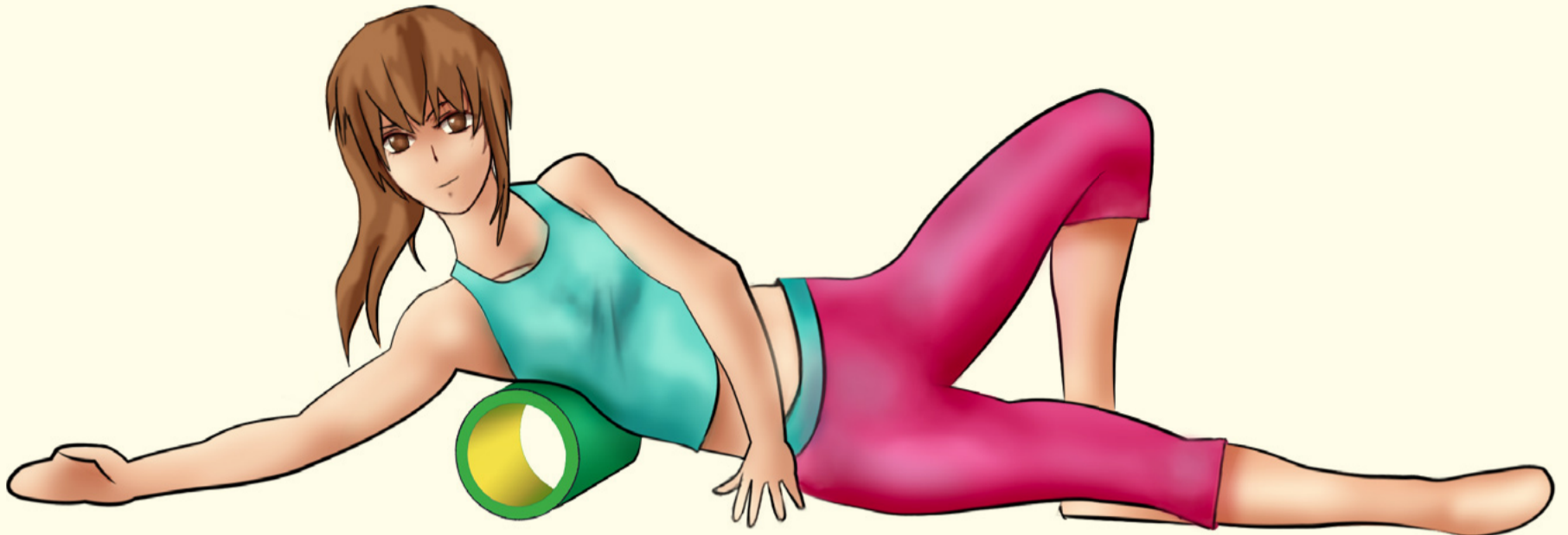
Reasons to Treat:

Injuries of the shoulders; partial or full muscle tears; phlebitis or thrombosis prohibit performance of this exercise.

Tip:

Trying to rotate your legs in/out from your hips as you roll allows you to more thoroughly 'hit' your hamstrings.

LATISSIMUS DORSI (LAT) ROLLS



Lying down on your side, place the roller directly below your armpit. Place the emphasis between your 'lat' muscle (latissimus dorsi) and the ground by extending out your lower arm as though reaching for something positioned above your head. Maintain balance and aid the rolling motion by propping up your other arm in front of you (your chest). Roll until the roller pad descends to a little above the lower rib cage, then ascend again. Practise this movement for up to 30 seconds, then switch to your other side. Ensure your abdominals remain flexed to avoid your spinal column becoming uncomfortably curved during this movement.

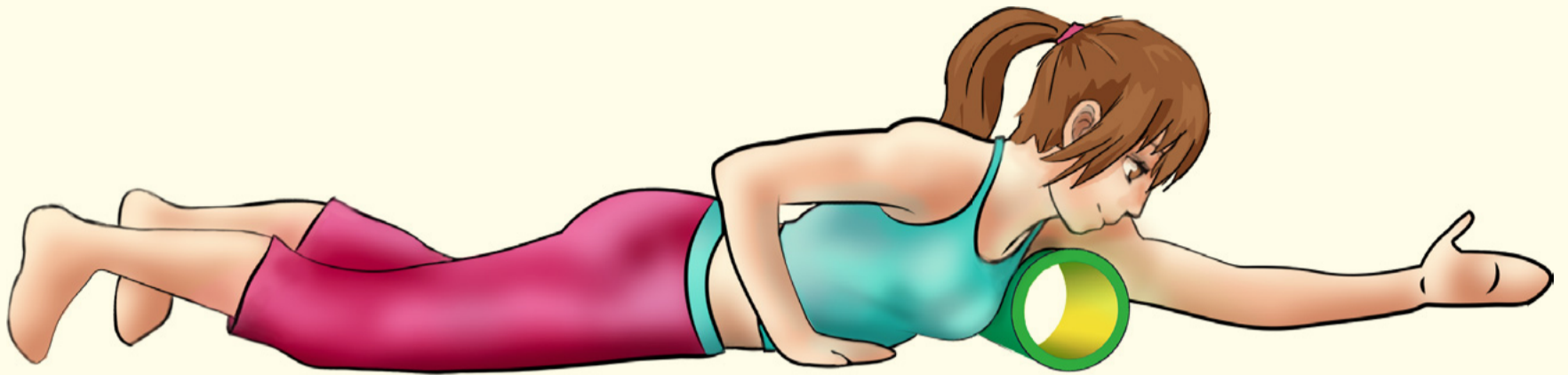
Reasons to Treat:

Overtraining can cause your lats, much like your pecs, to become stiff and short. The resulting lack of extensibility could result in poor mechanics during many lifts (including those not actually targeting your lats, like, for example, squatting or Olympic lifts) and/or overuse injuries.

Tip:

Keeping the thumb of the extended arm pointing upwards (towards the ceiling) places your arm into a position that will aid pre-stretching your lats. Ensure you reach the entire musculature by cautiously rotating your body.

CHEST ROLLS



Lie on the floor with the roller located at shoulder height. Extending one arm straight in front of you, lean slightly to that side so you can feel the emphasis on your chest muscles. Planting your feet firmly onto the ground and using your other arm to help, roll with small movements back and forth for about 30 seconds, then switch to your other side. Ensure the emphasis is directly placed onto the chest and, as usual, keep your abdominals tight in order to avoid unnecessary strain on your lower back.

Reasons to Treat:

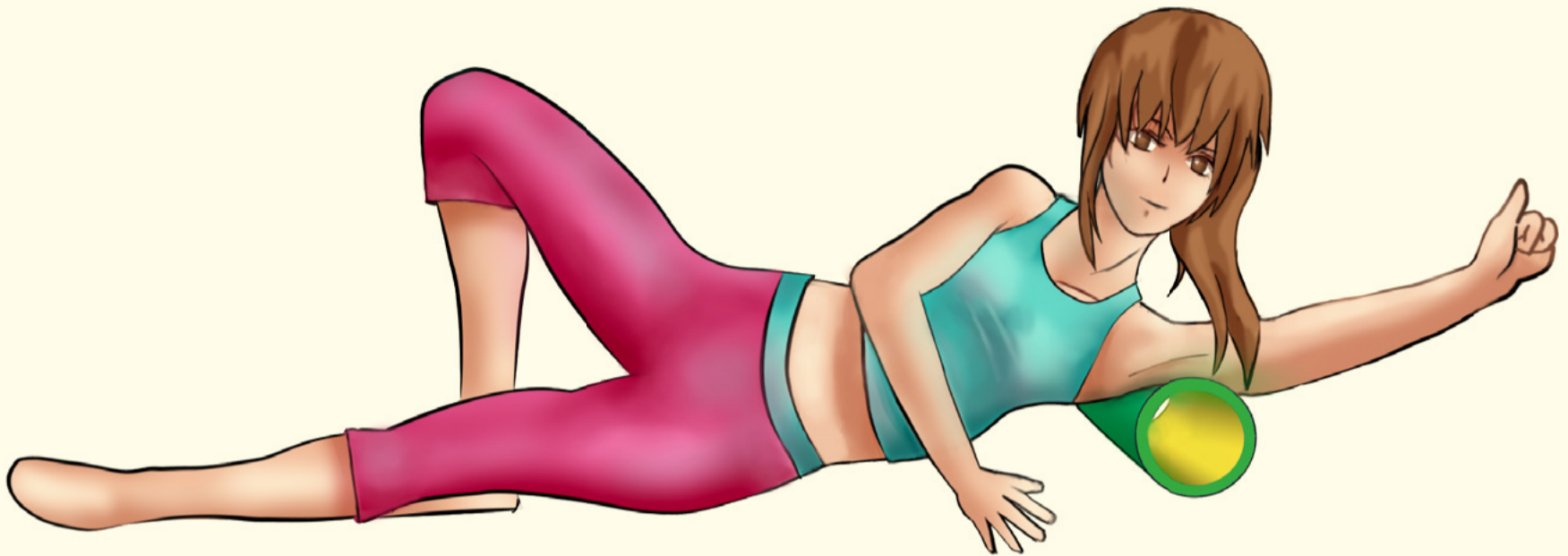
Upper chest muscle weakness or stiffness could result in elongation of your back muscle. This exercise is particularly recommended for individuals having to sit

the best part of the day (such as in front of a computer, with shoulders dropped and hunched forward). In case of potentially existing soft tissue injury, this exercise should be carried out carefully by women. The chest roll reduces muscle tightness and soreness throughout the chest.

Tip:

Press down as forcefully as possible with your chest

TRICEPS



Lying on your side, your arm stretched out overhead, and place your upper arm's back onto the roller. Increase the pressure by placing your head onto your arm. Roll slowly along your upper arm's entire surface. Sliding your torso along the floor may help to get a greater range of motion. After rolling for between 30 and 60 seconds, switch sides. Try rotating your shoulder internally and externally to focus increased pressure on the triceps' various heads.

Reasons to Treat:

Adhesion or scarring of the triceps is frequently the result of overtraining (excessive work on your 'beach' muscles).

Tip:

To increase pressure, rotate your arms or use one of the above mentioned techniques while rolling. This should be done with caution in case of shoulder injuries.

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