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Muscle Recovery: Self Myofascial Release

After my post on [fitness definitions](#), I thought it would be good if I posted some information on a few of the terms I described. I figured a good started point would be SMR or self myofascial release as it's a great recovery technique.

SMR is most often done with a foam roller, but it can also be done with golf balls, a tennis or lacrosse ball, some PVC pipe with insulation around it, The Stick or even a frozen waterbottle.

The goal with SMR is to release knots and relax muscles and stimulate the stretch reflex so you can recover faster and reduce pain while increasing mobility after workouts.

How do you perform SMR?

The basic movement is just putting the foam roller, ball or whatever you're using under/against the muscle you want to work on. The goal is to create pressure against the muscle with whatever SMR tool you're using, and then roll it around that muscle group. If you find a particularly tight area, spend extra time on that area of the muscle group.

In general you simply roll around the muscle until you find a "tender" area, then focus on that area for 1-2 minutes and move onto the next area.

You can perform SMR on all the major muscle groups and many of the smaller ones fairly easily. There's no "right" way to do it (despite what some experts may tell you), so play around with it a little bit.

If you find you need to spend more or less time than recommended, then that's great. It's just a guideline. If you're watching videos on Youtube that tell you to do it a certain way and it doesn't work for you, then try to find a way that does. (If it does work then great!).

Here are a few techniques for performing SMR on your feet:

With a lacrosse or tennis ball, roll it around under your foot while focusing on the tender spots. Make sure you don't just do the bottom of the foot, but also the inside and outside. This can also be done with a frozen waterbottle, which will effectively ice your foot while doing SMR. (For the frozen water bottle to be really effective you need to spend at least 5 minutes/foot)

You can also perform SMR with golf balls. Get a bunch of golf balls (you don't need good ones) and place them on a piece of foam or a pillow or if you live in an old house on shag carpet (if anybody still has that stuff...I don't think people like being able to lose their keys and wallet in their carpet).

Place the golf balls on your choice of foamy surface and step on them. Then just "march" on the golf balls for a minute or two. The amount of golf balls you need will depend on the size of your feet.

When to Perform SMR

The most common time to use self myofascial release techniques is post-workout. Right after you've abused your body and it's begging you to be nice. It's a great for reducing the pain from your workouts (which is great because who likes living in pain?) and can even be done on your off days to keep your muscle soreness down.

Some people do it on a daily basis, I simply do it whenever I feel like I need it. I'm not currently competing in anything so I don't need to be in peak condition, and therefore I see no need to do it daily. However, if you are in competitive sports or your job requires you to be in the best shape you can be in at all times (like a firefighter), I recommend doing SMR daily or at least 3-4 times/week.

And that is basically all there is to SMR. There are a number of ways you can do it, so play around with it!

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Got questions? Leave a comment below!

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