

Self-Help Myofascial Release Methods

The objects suggested for use are listed on page 2, along with Method 2

Method 1 Use for chronic pain or any recurring issues

For use in places on your body where you hold tension or pain on a regular basis, or when you have to limit your activities because of the pain and recovery time.

Select an object that will exert an appropriate amount of pressure on your chronically tight, tender and/or painful spots, when you lay on them. If you can't soften your body onto the object because of the pain or fear of the pain, select the softer objects at first. Another suggestion is to treat the area around, instead of on the worst spot first so some of the tension is released from it.

Usually it is best to lay on the floor so the object chosen can firmly push up on you. If you need to lie on a bed use the firmer objects, since the mattress will absorb some of the force.

Use to release myofascial tissue (muscles and the connective tissue) by laying the tight or tender part of the body directly on the object. We're not trying to determine your upper threshold of pain. If it causes you to tighten up against it to "take" the pain, it won't be effective, so use a softer object. Remain still for at least five (5) minutes to allow for longer lasting tissue release. Usually, in 30 - 60 seconds you will start to feel the tension ease, but most of the benefit starts happening around the three minute mark, so relax a while. After that spot has been treated, move your body or the object so the pressure is at the next loudest complaint and repeat.

Since we are retraining your protective nervous system's habitual response to this tension or pain, consistency is important. At one time this pain response was helpful to prevent further injury, but now your body has become over-protective to the slightest sense of a threat. This method allows you to relax into the tension and feel the therapeutic release and softening. As your protective nervous system realizes that survival is possible when this tension is released, the cycle can finally stop.

For best results:

- Use this method at least once a day. Two or three times a day is preferred.
- Shut off the television and put on some relaxing music.
- Put your cell phone on silent and don't play with or even look at it.
- At first set a timer for the five (5) minutes each time. With experience this is unnecessary.
- Set a timer for the total time you have for treatment. This way you can relax.
- Use pillows where needed for comfort
- Close your eyes, focus your attention on the sensations near the area treated, then in the body.
- Allow a few minutes after a session to feel the difference.
- Don't get spastic and jerk around to see if you can cause the pain intensity to return.
- Get up slowly after a session so you don't activate the protective response again. If you need to kick back into high gear, do it over several minutes without tensing or stressing your body. Pay close attention to when you tense the area that you have been treating and find a way to stop, it is a bad habit. If you are planning on exercising, warm up and then ramp up the workout without the tension and don't go for your personal best that day. If necessary, use lighter weights and really concentrate on perfect form, using only those muscles necessary for the task.

Self-Help Myofascial Release Methods (Continued)

Read Method 1 for Chronic Pain, on page 1

These objects have different densities and you may need to experiment to find the ones that work best for your use. As you perform these regularly you will be able to use a more firm object.

- Tennis balls** Standard tennis balls are firm and may be too intense at first, unless on a bed.
U.S. Open Orange tennis balls are the same diameter but less firm.
U.S. Open Red tennis balls are larger in diameter and softer.
- Racquet balls** Smaller in diameter than tennis balls and a little less firm.
- Pool Noodles** Very versatile. The length gives options along the spine. Cut pieces fit anywhere.
Density can be increased by inserting a dowel or tool handle into the center hole.
Using two pieces along both sides of the spine relieves a lot of back tension.
Angle it to fit that long spot on the trapezius, between shoulder blades and spine.
Treat both sides at the same time, even when only one bothers you.
To measure for your spine, sit up and place the noodle upright behind you.
Reach back with one hand and grab the noodle just above your shoulder. Cut.
- Foam rollers** Firm. Because of the large diameter, use pillows to support the head, if needed.
Lay with it on the spine along upper back to open up and stretch the chest.
For low back tension, lay face down with the roller across both hip bones.
- Therapy balls** Versatile. Inflatable and infinitely adjustable
- Tightly rolled-up Pillow Cases, Washcloths or Towels** Very versatile. Pillow cases and old thread-worn towels make firmer tools.
Can be used along each side of the spine
Fold the width to the size needed for treatment and roll it up tight.
Roll up a washcloth and place it aligned with the spine, so only the sacrum will be contacted. This helps release the sacroiliac joints and can help with sciatic pain.
Use for a torsioned pelvis to help realign the hips. When face up it should go under the hip that is usually high. When face down it is placed under the hip that is usually low.

Method 2 Do not use this method for chronic pain.

For places that get tight and sore after workouts, but don't cause lasting problems. Using a foam roller or firm ball, lay the part of the body on the roller or ball and roll over it. Start with a head to toe movements along the area. After several passes then roll using different angles, but still mainly head to toe. Then move to side to side movements across the area. Finish with the head to toe movements.