

Self Myofascial Release Technique

By Curb Ivanic, M.Sc, CSCS, PES

What is self myofascial release and how does it work?

Self myofascial release (SMFR) is a great way to improve flexibility and mobility of tight muscles and restricted joints. It works on two principles: (1) it breaks up fascial adhesions and (2) it manipulates certain neuromuscular receptors to let the muscle release any tightness.

When should I do it?

You should do SMFR before your workouts or runs. This will help your restricted areas improve their mobility and function allowing you to perform better. You can also do it after your workout, run or any time you feel you have excessive tension in an area.




How do you do it?




The basic technique is as follows:




- Position the appropriate muscle on the roller and find any tight and/or tender areas.
- Once found, hold the muscle on the roller until the tenderness is decreased by 75%.
- Then move on to another tender spot.
- Breathe deeply and slowly to help your body relax; rapid, shallow breathing will prevent your body from being able to release tension.
- Make sure you roll & move slowly; do not roll quickly over a muscle, as this will have the opposite effect of what you're trying to achieve.
- Do 1 – 2 sets per muscle group; it should take about 30 – 60 seconds for each muscle.
- Sometimes when you first begin SMFR it may take a little longer for a muscle to release but keep at it and soon it shouldn't take too long at all.



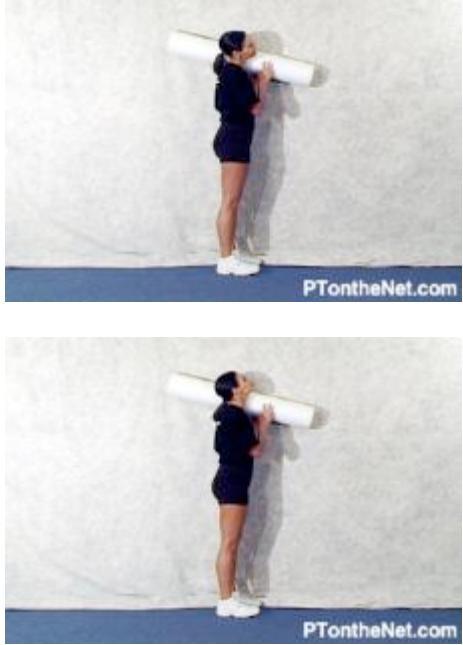
For specific technique on various muscles throughout the body please see the instructions on the following pages. SMFR is best utilized on your functionally and/or chronically tight muscles. This is determined by having a proper assessment done by a qualified professional such as a physiotherapist, sports med. doctor, chiropractor or an Ultra Fitness coach.

Ultra Fitness is extending two special offers to Mountain Madness clinic participants. See the end of the article for details.

Targeted Muscle(s) & Instructions	Photo
<p>Calves (gastrocnemius & soleus)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place foam roll under mid belly of lower leg. Cross left leg over right leg to increase pressure (optional). <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slowly roll calf area to find the most tender area. If a tender point is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. Do this with foot turned up, out and in. 	
<p>Hamstrings (back of thigh)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place hamstrings on the roll with hips unsupported. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feet are crossed to increase leverage. Roll from knee toward hip. If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	
<p>Peroneals (outer lower leg)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position yourself on your side with elbow under the shoulder, opposing hand placed in front of the body and opposite leg bent forward to help stabilize. Position the roller on the side of the calf. Leave hip on the floor. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate the core/glutes by bracing and squeezing. Raise the hips upwards increasing the pressure on the lower calf. Roll in either direction until a “tender point” is found, hold on that point until you feel the tenderness release by approx 75%. Muscles are 3 dimensional, so don't just roll in the same plane-up & down. You are allowed to move across the peroneal also. Don't continually roll back and forth quickly, this will antagonize the muscle and have the opposite effect we are looking for. Stop on the tender point until tenderness eases. 	

Targeted Muscle(s) & Instructions	Photo
<p>Glutes/Piriformis (butt muscles)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin positioned as shown with foot crossed to opposite knee. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll on the posterior hip area. • Increase the stretch by pulling the knee toward the opposite shoulder. • If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	 <p>PTontheNet.com</p>
<p>Tensor Fascia Latae (TFL) (outer front hip)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay face down with thighs on foam roll. • Brace your abs & tighten gluteus to prevent low back compensations. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foam roll is placed just below and to the outside of your hip bone. • If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	 <p>PTontheNet.com</p>
<p>Iliotibial Band (ITB) (outside of thigh)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position yourself on your side lying on foam roll. • Bottom leg is raised slightly off floor. • Maintain head in “neutral” with ears aligned with shoulders. • This will be EXTREMELY PAINFUL for many, and should be done in moderation. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll just below hip joint down the outside of your thigh to the knee. • If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	 <p>PTontheNet.com</p>

Targeted Muscle(s) & Instructions	Photo
<p>Adductors (inner thigh)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the thigh and place foam roll in the groin region with body prone on the floor. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be cautious when rolling near the adductor complex origins at the pelvis. If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	
<p>Quadriceps (front of thigh)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body is positioned prone with quadriceps on foam roll Brace your abs & tighten your glutes to prevent low back compensations <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll from pelvic bone to knee, emphasizing the lateral thigh If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	
<p>Erector Spinae (low back spinal muscles)</p> <p>NOTE: If you have any spinal injuries please check with doctor or health professional before doing this movement, as it may not be a safe exercise.</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position yourself on low back just above the hips. Pull in your navel to help in spinal stabilization. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll slightly to one side so that you are on the muscle that runs parallel to the spine and not the spine itself and HOLD. SLOWLY, the client should roll the foam roller down the side of the spine toward to pelvis, feeling for an area of increased tension. Once found, the client should HOLD on this area for 30 sec - 1 min or until the muscle has relaxed about 50% (AVOID rolling over this trigger point area). Once released, roll to another spot and HOLD. 	

Targeted Muscle(s) & Instructions	Photo
<p>Rhomboids & Thoracic Mobility (mid-back)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross arms to the opposite shoulder to clear the shoulder blades across the mid-back. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lie over the roller and let your back GENTLY extend over the roller. • Support your head with your hands. • Roll mid-back area on the foam roll. • If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. • You can also simply lie in extended position to open up your chest and mobilize your mid-spine. 	
<p>Latissimus Dorsi (lats) (side of back)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position yourself on your side with arm outstretched and foam roll placed just above armpit. • Thumb is pointed up to pre-stretch the lats. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement during this technique is minimal • If a “tender point” is located, stop rolling, and rest on the tender point until pain decreases by 75%. 	
<p>Sternocleidomastoid (side of neck)</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing beside a wall place roller against the wall and gently position the side of your neck against it. • Tilt the roller on a slight angle with the front being lower than the back. <p>Movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate the core/glutes and keep the shoulder blades retracted. • Apply a small amount of pressure to the roller in the neck area, gently move it around/up & down that area until a tender point is located. • Stop on the tender point, once it has eased by approx. 75% & move on. 	

Photos courtesy of ptonthenet.com

Mountain Madness Special Offer - Assessment & SMRF Session

Find out your functionally tight muscles and how to use the foam roller to release them. Ultra Fitness is pleased to offer a special 1-hour one-on-one session with an Ultra Fitness coach. This informative session will take you through a functional movement screen & muscle length-tension tests and then instruct you on proper use of the foam roller. Cost is \$70 (+ GST) (foam roller not included – these can be purchased at North Shore Athletics).

Email info@ultrafitness.net or call 604-780-6804 to schedule your appointment.

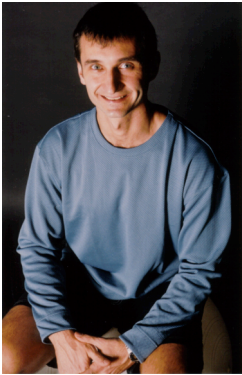
Special Mountain Madness Rates for Ultra Fitness Clinics

Cross train to prepare your body for the trails! Ultra Fitness is conducting an optimum core conditioning clinic in North Vancouver and a full body outdoor conditioning clinic in Vancouver.

For Mountain Madness participants we're offering 10% off our regular clinic rates. Full details for each clinic are on the website, <http://www.ultrafitness.net/clinics.htm>.

Email info@ultrafitness.net or call 604-780-6804 to register or for more information.

About the Author



Curb Ivanic holds a Masters degree in Exercise Science specializing in Performance Enhancement and Injury Prevention. He is the owner of Ultra Fitness Coaching & Consulting (www.ultrafitness.net) as well as the developer and co-producer of the Sport Shape Up Running DVD's (www.sportshapeup.com).

His designations include Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) with the National Strength and Conditioning Association and Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES) with the National Academy of Sports Medicine. Both are the top-level certifications offered by each organization.

Curb has developed a reputation as an innovative, knowledgeable and effective coach. He has competed in trail races from 10 km to 64 km and has trained trail runners of all levels from beginners to ultramarathon champions.

Contact Curb by phone at 604-780-6804 or email, curb@ultrafitness.net.