

RUNNER'S WORLD

Touch and Go

Tending to your muscles between runs can ease the aches - as long as you do it correctly, says Caitlin Chock. Who doesn't love a massage? And who doesn't think, 'I wish I could get one more often'? Enter self-massage. 'It can help take care of the tightness that comes with day-to-day training,' says Julia Kirtland, the 1997 US national marathon champion who's now a massage therapist in Maine, US. Here's how it's done.



'The Stick' for the calves

While sitting, hold The Stick (£42.50, the-stick.co.uk) with both hands and use it along your calf muscle. Start at the the knee and go down to the top of the achilles in a controlled motion, and then back up.



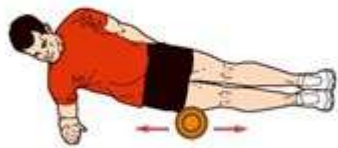
Small screwdriver handle for the glutes

Along the glute and hip regions lies a tightly condensed network of pressure points known as the iliac crest. Press and hold the blunt end of the handle in one spot, keep it there for 10 seconds, and then move to the next spot. You'll feel the pressure points as you hit them, like pressing on a sore spot.



Golf ball for the plantar fascia

Sit down on a chair and rest one foot on top of the golf ball. Starting lightly, gradually apply more and more pressure on the ball as you roll your sole across it. Work in long, smooth strokes from the base of your heel and up to your forefoot, then back down again.



Foam roller for the iliotibial (IT) band

Lie on your side on top of a foam roller such as The Grid (£35, triggerpointuk.com); start at the top of your IT band, where the muscle inserts at the hip. Distribute your weight according to the pressure you want, using your arms for support. Roll down slowly until you get to the top of the knee, then back up.

Rub the right way -*Julia Kirtland's self-massage tips:*

Know when to stop If you over-massage an inflamed area, you can make it worse. Focus on a spot for 10-15 minutes maximum.

Not so fast Ease into it and avoid going too hard. Warm up, in the same way you would pre-run.

Daily press 'I'd say a few minutes a day is better than half an hour once a week,' says Kirtland.

Handy work Tools can't sense your muscles relaxing, so stop occasionally and use your hands to see how your body is reacting.

This article has been taken from the Runners World blog. This blog can be found via the runners world website ww.runnersworld.co.uk

Please read on for comments from the River Club Physiotherapist and insight from the personal training team. More information about our services can be found at our websites:

www.thebodymechanics.co.uk

www.theriverclub.co.uk

Comment:



Dave the Physiotherapist

"Self massage is undoubtedly good for the recovery of the muscles following exercise, it can also maintain the flexibility of the muscles during everyday life. You don't need specific tools like 'the stick' though in my opinion (I wonder if the author has a contract with them?!). The problem with this kind of advice is that it assumes that people know what level of pressure to apply in order to achieve the necessary results. Some people find that they hit the right pressure in the right place with no problems, others need a little guidance. If you are suffering any aches or pains during or following a workout, don't hesitate to contact us for advice or an appointment."



Jez the PT

"I suggest incorporating self massage in to your stretch routine following your workout. It is really useful for problem areas or muscles that regularly 'tighten up' and adds a new dimension to an old stretch routine. I would also have to add that 9 times out of 10 I see people doing little or no stretching after their workouts or a one stretch routine fits all workouts approach. I would recommend changing up your stretch routine regularly, ensuring the stretches focus on the muscles most stressed during that particular workout. However, I would have to say I use this tool most effectively to target often hard to stretch fascia (the connective tissue that holds bundles of muscle fibre together) The Plantar Fascia and the foam roller IT band exercises are very useful for achieving this. If you would like any help mastering any of these exercises or feel you need to update your stretch routine, don't hesitate in contacting one of the team."

Focus: Self Massage