



PHYSIO'S Therapy

Philip Newton
discusses injury,
treatment and
recovery

ROLL AWAY THE PAIN

Foam rollers have become popular amongst squash players - from club level right through to the professionals. Some players use them as part of their warm-up and warm-down routines, while some use them on recovery days to deal with tight and fatigued muscles.

The idea behind foam rolling is to use body weight against the roller to deliver a compressive massage to soft tissues that are perceived to be tight and painful. Some recent research has shown that using foam rollers can result in physical performance improvements that should be of benefit to squash players, such as improving mobility of the hips, quadriceps, hamstring and calf muscles, and of reducing muscle soreness that follows tough bouts of exercise.

The improvements in flexibility, however, tend to be short term.

Despite the favourable experiences of many squash players who use foam rollers and of the scientific studies that point to useful physical improvements, many questions remain. Two obvious ones are how often and how much foam rolling is needed to achieve the best results, and whether or not foam rolling has any potential down sides? Regarding the last question, I have concerns about what could be viewed as excessive use of foam rolling. This

could be obsessive daily use or sessions that



involve very strong self massage. This type of foam rolling is sometimes used by people who have particularly painful and stubborn areas of soft tissue pain and stiffness. My concern in such cases is that aggressive and frequent use of foam rolling could result in soft tissue sensitivity, and actually become something that perpetuates the problem.

To get the benefits of foam rolling and to avoid some possible downsides, I recommend following these dos and don'ts:

DO:

- Use foam rolling alongside traditional warm-up and warm-down exercise routines
- Expect flexibility improvements to be short term
- Foam roll for 10-20 minutes (total session) to reduce post-exercise muscle soreness

DON'T:

- Substitute warm-up/warm-down exercise sessions with just foam rolling
- Become obsessive and over-reliant on foam rollers
- Cause pain, as regularly doing so could result in hypersensitivity and damage