



## Foam Roller Exercises for Posture

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### Postural positioning on the foam roller

Maintaining the body's natural alignment to reduce stressful forces and eliminate awkward positioning is of crucial importance when performing prolonged or repetitive work activity.

Posture is the alignment and maintenance of body segments in certain positions, such as standing, lying or sitting. There is thought to be an optimal posture for any given task. Considerable deviations from optimal posture are thought to be aesthetically unpleasant, adversely influence muscle efficiency, and predispose individuals to musculoskeletal or neurological pathologic conditions (4).

Poor posture or musculoskeletal disorders can predispose individuals to respiratory dysfunction. A forward head, rounded shoulders, and trunk flexion reduce both the ability of the diaphragm to contract the ribs to expand throughout their full range (3).

Functionally, when the spine is properly aligned, the body works most efficiently and provides a stable base for movement. The nerves and the internal organs are able to perform their functions most efficiently (1).

The muscles that are involved in maintaining posture will depend to some degree on the activity or position of the person, but by and large we can make generalizations on which muscles are the primary postural muscles. The postural muscles for upright posture are commonly thought to be the abdominal muscle group and the back extensors (4).

Most athletes or orthopedic patients could use some core-stabilization work. People who have poor postural habits, asymmetries in static stance, chronic or repetitive injury patterns, shoulder impingement, overuse injuries, non-traumatic injuries and postoperative patients commonly present some signs of core instability.

“When used properly, foam rollers provide sensory motor challenges on two planes. They also enhance balance, reactions, body awareness, muscle re-education, motor planning, dynamic strengthening and neural and muscular flexibility” (3).

The spine is an integral part of core stability; thus, athletes with low back and cervical injuries will also benefit from core-stability work (2).

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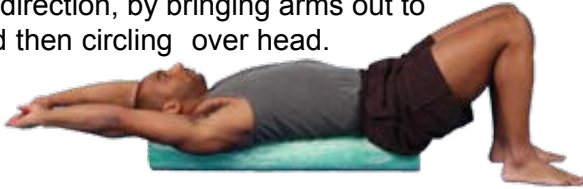
Foam rollers can be a great addition to a postural alignment program; some exercises to try are listed below.

To perform all the exercises: lie supine on a foam roller of your choice, aligned along your spine, head supported and knees bent for stability. The roller should be long enough to fully support your back and your head (usually about 36 inches long). Let gravity gently pull your shoulder blades around the roller. During these exercises, make sure to keep your shoulders relaxed and keep breathing.

1) To stretch out the front thoracic area, let arms fall to your sides at a 45 degree angle from your body. As you breathe in, expand your diaphragm and as you breathe out, flatten your stomach toward the foam roller. You should be pain-free while performing this stretch. Let chest stretch for 1-3 minutes at a time, once or twice daily.

2) To stretch the shoulder muscles, start by straightening your arms out in front of you (at a 90 degree angle from your body) towards the ceiling with your palms facing each other. To perform the exercise, reach fingers toward the ceiling so shoulder blades separate, then relax and allow your shoulder blades to squeeze the roller. Repeat this exercise 5-10 times, making sure to move slowly and keep breathing deep.

3) To relax the shoulder muscles and increase range of motion, raise arms over head and slowly circle them down to your sides and back up to overhead, while keeping them level and controlled. Do 5-10 circles, and then repeat 5-10 times in the opposite direction, by bringing arms out to sides and then circling over head.



4) The scissor exercise works the shoulder muscles as well as the abdominal core muscles. To start, raise your right arm over head and put your left arm down to your side. Slowly lower your right arm down to your side, while raising your left arm over head.

5) To work the core muscles, start with arms down to side and knees bent with feet flat on the floor. While keeping core muscles stabilized, slowly lift one leg off the ground about 10-15 inches, then lower back to the ground. Repeat lift with other leg. Do 2-3 sets of 10 lifts per leg.



Foam rollers mentioned in this newsletter can be purchased from OPTP. Shop online at [www.optp.com](http://www.optp.com) or talk to one of our knowledgeable customer service representatives Monday-Friday from 8AM-5PM CST. Call us today at 1-800-367-7393, and we'll be happy to assist you with all your health and fitness needs.

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