

Using the Foam Roll for Thoracic Mobility and Posture

1. Lie on your back on the ground and notice what parts of your spine and soft tissue are in contact with the ground. Pay specific attention to how far your shoulders are off the ground. You can also take your arms out to your sides with your elbows bent, and move your shoulders into external rotation, noticing how much movement you have and how far your hands are off the floor.
2. Lie on the foam roll with the roll parallel and directly under your spine. Your head should be resting on the roll while your knees are bent and feet are on the ground to maintain balance.



3. With your shoulders flexed to 90 degrees and your elbows straight, protract your shoulder blades and reach for the ceiling, then retract your shoulder blades, moving your hands away from the ceiling. Focus on reaching as far as you can, then “wrap” your shoulder blades around the roll as you retract. Repeat 10 times. Then perform the same movement but reach for the ceiling with one arm at a time. Repeat 5 times with each arm.



4. Keep your arms in this position, but perform circular motions with your arms and shoulders. The movement will be small. Perform circles clockwise and then counter-clockwise, 10 times in each direction.



5. Flex and extend your shoulders, arms going in opposite directions. Repeat 10 times.



6. Take your arms out to the side (horizontal abduction) and then cross them over your chest (horizontal adduction). Repeat 10 times.



7. With your shoulders abducted to 90 degrees, elbows bent to 90 degrees, and arms in external rotation, slowly move your arms up and down (parallel to floor) to see where your pecs are the tightest. When you find a tight area, stop and rest in that position for 30 seconds. A 1 – 3 pound weight can be placed in each hand during the stretch for increased stress if desired. Repeat this at other points in the range that are tight.



8. CAREFULLY roll off the foam roll and turn the roll perpendicular to your spine. Lie with the roll placed in the mid thoracic area, knees bent and feet and buttocks placed flat on floor. Brace with your abdominal muscles and extend over the roll. Then move the roll up or down slightly and repeat. You can also lift your buttocks off the ground and use your feet to slowly move the roll up and down your spine. Turning slightly to one side or the other will provide a rotational mobilization as well.



9. If you are tight through your neck muscles, place the roll under your base of your skull while lying flat on the floor. Adjust the roll so contact is being made over the areas that are tight or sore along your skull. Relax and concentrate on your breathing for 1-2 minutes. Rolling your head from side to side can help relax the tissue as well.



10. Carefully get off the roll and get on your hands and knees. Place the roll parallel to the right side of your body, outside your hand and leg. Place the back of your left hand on the roll and rotate your spine so your hand rolls the foam roll out and in. Move the roll to the left side of your body and perform the same motion with your right hand.



11. Lie on your back again and repeat step one, noticing the differences in mobility.



12. Stand upright and lift your sternum (breast bone) to bring your shoulder blades back and down and to open up your chest. Try to maintain this position during your daily activities.