

Using “The Stick” to Stretch the Legs

By Dr. Andy Rosser, Downtown Olympia

Please check out my VIDEO DEMO for extra tips on using The Stick:

www.rosserchiro.com/video-using-the-stick

One of the tools that I use in my office every day is called “The Stick.” It’s a fairly simple device made up of two handles, a solid plastic core, and a number of small plastic cylinders that act like miniature rolling pins. It’s used to passively stretch the soft tissue (muscles and fascia) without stressing the tendons and ligaments. It’s too simple to call what it does “massage” because I think of massage as being a healing art that is provided by a skilled practitioner, and no tool can replace that. At the same time, there is tremendous value to having a daily habit for taking care of muscles that exercise.

When we exercise, our muscles acquire microscopic damage that produces swelling, congestion, and debris in the area in and around the cells. This congestion and swelling can delay the body’s healing response to exercise by slowing down the delivery of fresh nutrients and oxygen to the damaged cells. At the same time, it inhibits the clearing of cellular waste and damaged cell particles. In other words, there is a tremendous traffic jam that delays material from coming and going to get the repair under way.

Understanding this process helps explain the need for recovery after exercise and how ignoring it can possibly lead to overuse/overtraining injuries.

During the recovery phase of exercise, we are seeking to repair damaged cells, replenish our energy stores, and restore the chemistry of the cells and extra-cellular matrix. If any of these things are not accomplished and we charge into our next session of exercise, it will be with compromise. Done often enough, our bodies may lose the ability to adapt to the stress of exercise and we may end up with an injury. The rest of this article will explain the simple technique I use to help minimize the cellular congestion that accompanies exercise. By using “The Stick”, you will be gently mobilizing the soft tissue in a way that helps to clear away the congestion and swelling so that fresh nutrients can get to the cells that are in need of repair.

Using “The Stick”

While seated in a chair, start rolling with moderate pressure over the quadriceps muscles. Don’t press too hard. In this case moderate pressure means that you are making just a shallow dent in the muscle as you roll over it. Make 15-20 passes over the muscle before switching to the lateral thigh (IT Band), then the hamstrings, and finally the inner thigh muscles. Next,

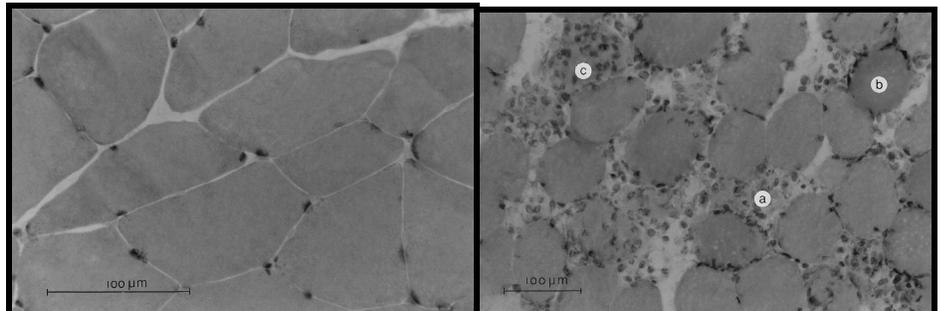
roll the anterior lower leg just lateral to the shin. (Rolling on bones hurts!) Follow that with the calf muscles, and you are done with that side! Do the same on the other leg following the same order. Start with the upper leg and finish with the lower leg. This sequence can be done daily or more often for best results.

“The Stick” can be purchased at our office, online, or through most cycling/running catalogs.

Read more about Dr. Rosser’s adventures as an amateur cyclist www.rosserchiro.com. He is the team chiropractor for the CBC/Olympia Orthopaedic Associates Racing Team, and assists other athletes in the community. For more information, he can be contacted at andy@rosserchiro.com.



“The Stick” is a handy self-care tool for cyclists.



A microscope’s view tells the whole story: On the left, muscle cells (pre-exercise.) On the right, muscle cells, swelling, and cellular debris (7 days post-exercise.)

[photo obtained online from *Clinical Science* (1999) 96, (105–115)]

