

Myofascial Release for Shoulder Pain and Impingement

Injuries during swim training are relatively rare and are usually limited to shoulders (and knees in breaststrokers). Swimmer's shoulder is usually not serious, but can cause a lot of pain. Luckily, performing one self-myofascial release can clear up most of swimmer's shoulder symptoms, such as infraspinatus.

Impairments:	Muscle (s):	Injuries:
Shoulder pain and upper arm pain. Decreased internal rotation range of motion and strength.	Infraspinatus, teres minor.	Swimmer's shoulder (shoulder tendinitis, shoulder impingement), labral tear, and any other shoulder issue.



Massaging this spot is can be tricky. But precision is not required: although there is one specific spot that's especially good, nearly *anywhere* just under the *ridge of bone on the shoulder blade* will get it. The infraspinatus is often a surprising key to pain and stiffness everywhere else in the shoulder... but *especially* all the way around on the other side, facing forward.

The swimmer will usually have poor shoulder internal rotation or a poor catch. To test for infraspinatus, lie on a baseball or golf ball

with the pressure on this spot for 2 minutes. Then re-check your shoulder range of motion, and often 10 – 20 degrees of internal rotation is gained!

Where is the Infraspinatus?

Generally it is the triangular shoulder blade. Finding the infraspinatus muscle is basically as easy as touching the back of the shoulder blade. Infra simply means under and spinatus or spine means ridge of the bone. The ridge you want to find the scapular spine. This bone runs perpendicular (more or less) to the spine. If you pat yourself on your back, you'll undoubtedly feel this bone. The entire muscle responds to self-myofascial release by improving shoulder mobility.

Role of the Infrapinatus

In athletes who perform a lot of overhead movements, the infraspinatus takes a beating. Each catch, rapidly stretches this muscle, then recoils it back to the original position (at least that is what's intended). Unfortunately, after millions of overhead movements this muscle loses elasticity and gets bound up, like an old rubber band.

When a muscle shortens, it cannot go through full range of motion. All the bones to which these muscles attach are also negatively influenced and lose motion. Before you know it, everything is restricted. Stretching seems intuitive, but it often worsens the problem.

Summary

Purpose:

The infraspinatus is repeatedly stretched during the catch phase of swimming. This overuse likely causes a rebound effect on the muscle creating tightness/trigger points. Common referral patterns are down the front and back (around the deltoid tuberosity) of the arm, and trigger points are along the muscle belly.



Place the ball somewhere around this area. The best place is between your infraspinatus and your teres minor, but you can move it around and figure out where you are tight.

Directions for Self-Myofascial Release:

Lie on your back with your knees bent and with the opposite arm place the tennis ball under the acromion (a bone on your shoulder blade) of the affected shoulder, This muscle is small, but make sure to find the most tender trigger point. Allow the ball to press on the trigger point for 2-5 minutes.