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## How to Use a Spikey Ball

to increase **flexibility**, improve **posture**, reduce **lower back pain** and get better **training results!**

Using a spikey ball is a powerful and effective way for you to get more out of your exercise and training routine. At Inspire Fitness, we successfully use and recommend spikey balls with a number of variations, to assist with loosening of muscle 'trigger points' or tightness within muscles. This facilitates the release of chronic muscular tension that restricts your posture, movement and circulation.

Introducing a spikey ball into your training is very effective for achieving a number of health and fitness outcomes; from **improving flexibility**, **enhancing posture**, **increasing balance**, **stimulating better foot biomechanics** and **improving lower body proprioception** for enhancing movement. As such, this is a tool that we highly recommend in your training for the purpose of rehabilitation, improving general health and fitness and improving athletic performance.

### #1: Foot Release Sequence

In a standing position place the spikey ball under the arch of your foot (shoes off). Roll the ball under the arch of the foot for 30 seconds while pushing pressure through the ball. Next while maintaining the ball under the arch raise the opposite leg in the air (balancing), forcing your body weight through the ball on your stance leg, then returning it back to the ground. Try to perform this without clawing the toes over the ball, gradually increasing your balancing time without returning the lifted leg to the floor.

This is a great way to finish a workout.



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This exercise creates the feeling that more of the foot is in contact with the ground, creating a greater sense of balance. It can also assist individuals who suffer from plantar fasciitis and Achilles pain, while also increasing flexibility in the calves and hamstrings.



### Advanced Variations of Foot Release

1. Place the spikey ball under the forefoot and perform the above mentioned balancing movement again, increasing single leg time maintained on the ball.
2. Place the spikey ball under the arch of your foot. The opposite leg now performs a forward kicking motion (small and controlled kick) while maintaining balance on your load leg. Repeat 10 times
3. Place the spikey ball under the forefoot. Opposite leg now performs a sideways (lateral) kick while load leg maintains a balanced position on the spikey ball. Kicking motion should be controlled and not lead to an increased height in the kicking hip or lateral curving of the spine.
4. Place the spikey ball under the forefoot. Opposite leg now performs a back kick (hip extension) while load leg maintains balance on the ball.

## #2: Supine Gluteals Release

Lie on your back, with your head supported by a pillow, your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Before massaging, feel how your pelvis, lower spine and hips rest on the floor, then place a spikey ball underneath each buttock just above the sit bones. Lower the gluteals down onto the spikey balls and return your pelvis to a neutral position. With a feeling of heaviness on the spikey balls, sway your hips from side to side. Think of your hips as a hammock as you sway, with one hip lowering deeper on the spikey ball and one hip rising as you move from side to side. Adjust the positions of the balls laterally to find areas of increased tightness. Focus more on releasing these tight spots. Massage for approximately 60 seconds before removing the spikey balls and returning to your original position. Again feel how the pelvis, lower spine and hips rest on the floor and note the change.



**Variation:** Returning the balls into the gluteals, the focus now is to isolate each of the gluteal muscles individually. While maintaining a neutral position with your pelvis, lower one knee laterally (lower sideways) towards the floor, then return back to the start position. Areas in the hips where tightness occurs are often different between hips, so alter the ball position to find the correct tight spot. The aim now is to keep repeating the lateral movement while maintaining a level pelvis (no swaying). Maintain a controlled breathing pattern, breathing out as you lower and breathing in as you return the leg to the start position.





### #3: Side-Lying Gluteals Release

Begin by laying on your right side with your body weight through your right hip. Have your bottom leg out straight and your top leg bent (foot flat on the floor) and the knee pointed vertical. Place one spikey ball into the fleshy part of your buttock (gluteal).

Massage the ball through the gluteals by performing circles with the hip. If you find a point that is very sensitive or slightly painful, keep the ball placed over the top of this (commonly a trigger point). The pain should dissipate over a 5 to 10 second period. After 10 seconds straighten the right leg out and then return it to the bent position. Perform this 5 times then massage the ball into a different position if you find another trigger point perform again.

This exercise is excellent for increasing hip flexibility in both the gluteals and also the hip adductor musculature. Incorrect loading through the hips and gluteals can create trigger points and dysfunction. By eliminating these, we are able to strengthen them to assist you in improving your pelvic stability and strength.

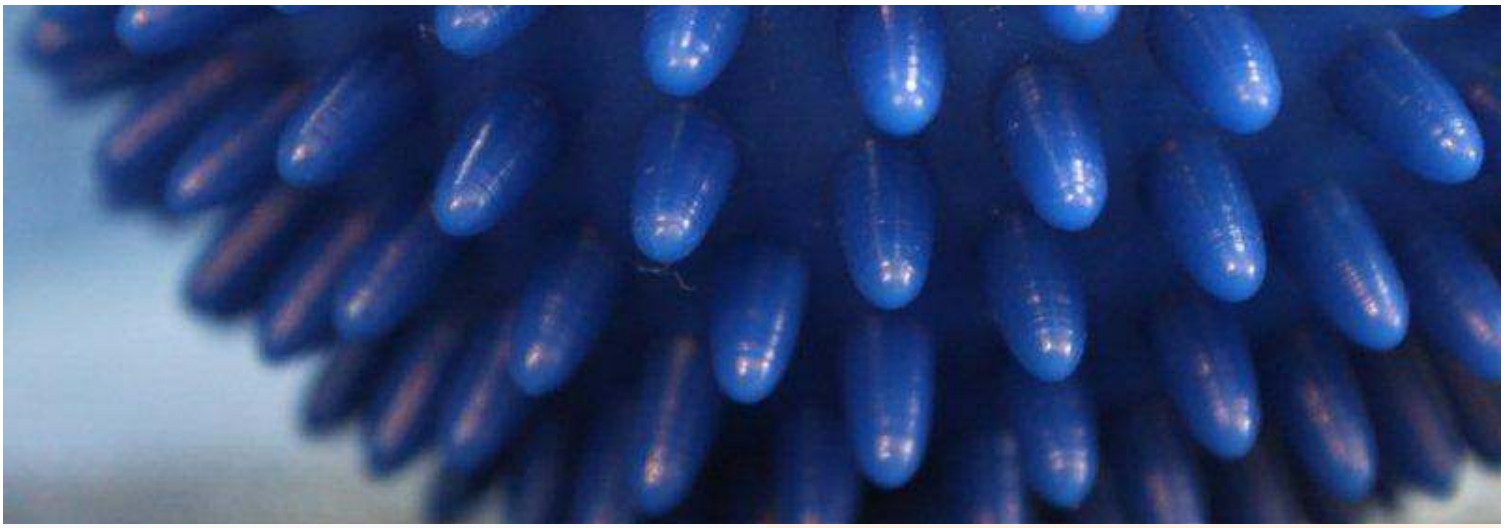


### #4: Spinal Mobility — Upper Back Extension

Lie on your back and place two spikey balls between your shoulder blades, on either side of your spine. Bend your knees to point to the ceiling with your feet flat on the floor. With your arms straightened and pointed toward the ceiling, inhale and lower both arms over your head. Exhale through your mouth as you bring your arms back to the start position. Repeat for 10 repetitions.



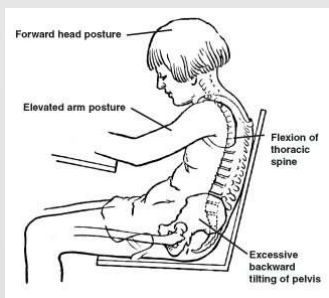
By moving your arms overhead with repetition, you are moving your spine into extension, thus assisting better movement in your upper spine, rib cage and across your chest. This exercise is beneficial for improving and restoring greater range of movement in your thoracic spine, and also assists your shoulder blades to move and function correctly. When performed in conjunction with the pectoral release, this exercise is excellent for those individuals who work at a desk and/or lack correct upper spine mobility.



## #5: Pectoral Release

This muscular release technique can be performed either up against a wall or in a door frame, by placing the spikey ball into the lateral edge of the pectoral muscle (chest region, just on the inside of the shoulder joint). Roll the ball across the pectoral muscle in the same direction as the muscle fibres run (horizontal), by slowly moving the ball side to side with 10 repetitions.

This exercise is beneficial for people with rounded shoulders and internally rotated shoulders. This is a common postural dysfunction which occurs due spending large amounts of time in seated positions, e.g. sitting at a desk, in front of a computer, driving, etc.



## Precautions

- Never attempt to stand (balance) with spikey ball positioned under your heel.
- Always position yourself away from objects and others when using a spikey ball under your feet, as potential for falling is increased with balance movements.

## Key points

- Spikey ball techniques improve the effectiveness of your training by addressing any biomechanical dysfunctions in your body.
- Incorporating these exercises into your program will help you to improve flexibility, enhance posture, increase balance, stimulate better foot biomechanics and improve lower body proprioception for enhancing movement.