

LIFE & STYLE

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THE GARDEN ISLAND

FRIDAY • MARCH 14, 2008

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Yamuna body rolling: Get fit through massage, stretching and toning

Pam Woolway

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Editor's note: This is the first article in a series to appear this month that will explore forms of exercise that stretch beyond the familiar.

Weight lifting, running, biking, aerobics — the mere mention of exercise sends a shiver of resistance (and guilt) up the spine of many. Exercise takes time. Exercise can be painful. Exercise means sweating, panting and often exertion. Face it — exercise sounds like work.

One relatively young form of exercise — just over 20 years old — combines simple stretches with self-massage.

"The three main things about using the ball are tractioning, breathing and sinking," said 20 year practitioner and massage therapist Lori Potter.

Potter is referring to Yamuna body rolling — an exercise done mostly on the floor with a 6- or 9-inch, firm ball.

Yamuna is the name of the hatha yoga instructor who developed this fitness technique over 20 years ago, Yamuna Zake. Zake describes her body-logic approach as a tool for

gentle tractioning that creates space in the body. This blend of massage and stretching has many first timers commenting on the sensation of being taller after just one session.

"You are telling the muscle 'we are lengthening you,'" said Potter. "Space — that's the message you want to send to your body."

It's about releasing patterns. People don't stretch. By doing a little ball work every day you are teaching the body to lengthen back out.

Lori Potter

Yamuna body rolling instructor

There is a reason for the route the ball follows.

"We move from origin to insertion," said Potter.

The origin of a muscle is where tendons and ligaments connect to bone. By releasing into the taut surface of the plastic ball circulation increases in that area. The tendon releases

supporting them in letting go," said Potter. "The ball is a tool of support."

Body rolling is touted not only for the massaging action that increases blood flow to muscles but for toning as well.

"So many of us are just into repetitive actions to get toned — like sit-ups."

Potter explained how muscles shorten with this sort of movement.

"If you lengthen the muscles they have more ability to do what you do," she said.

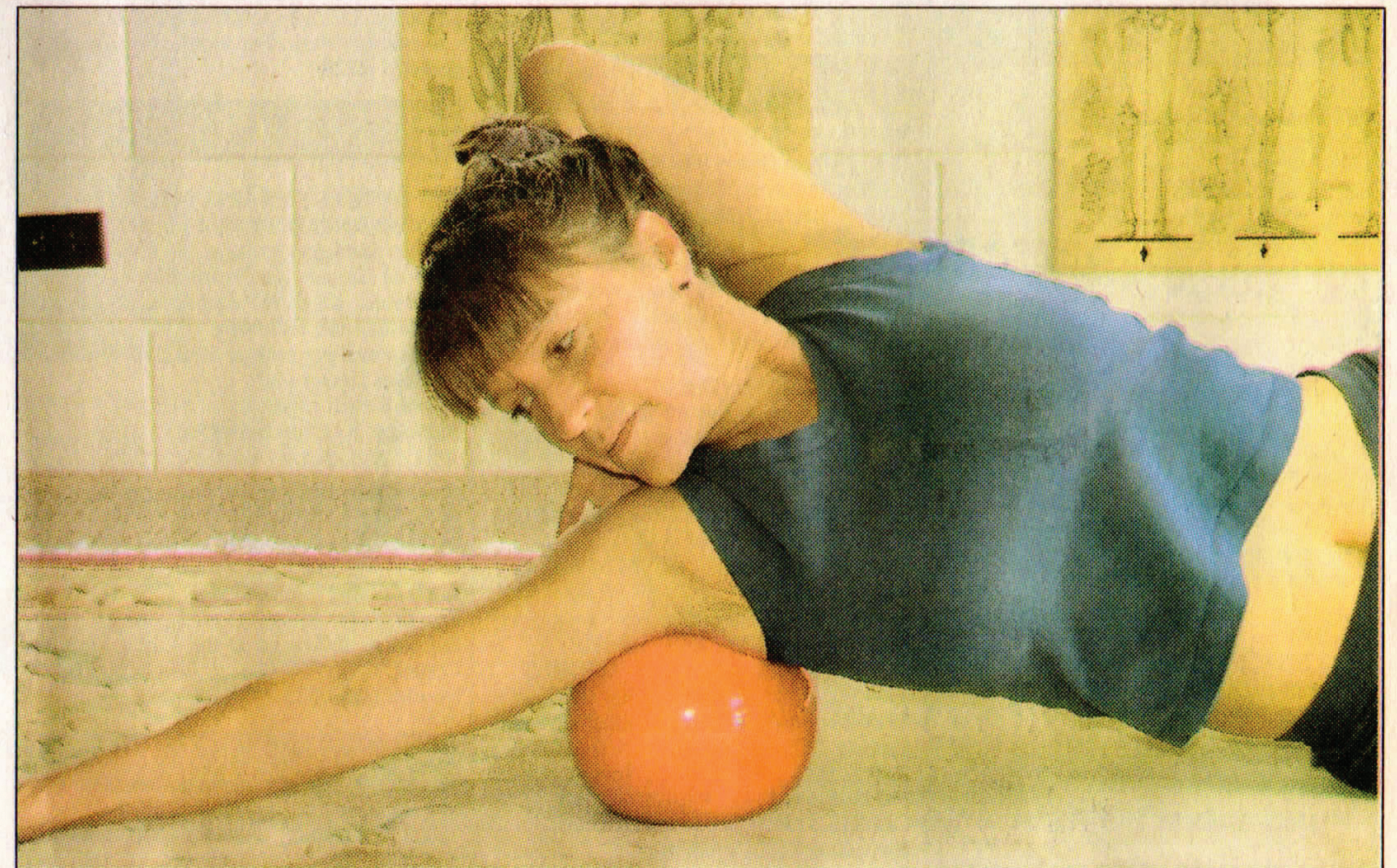
Potter encourages ball work before taking on a new exercise regimen.

"If you want to start running, condition your body first," said Potter. By correcting postural patterns before training you elongate the muscle and avoid injury.

"It's about releasing patterns. People don't stretch. By doing a little ball work every day you are teaching the body to lengthen back out."

"It's as if you were able to get a massage every day," she said. "Increased blood flow brings life back to the muscles."

By inching down the body, breathing and holding, you get more in touch with where tension is held in your body. By



Contributed photo

Yamuna body rolling instructor Lori Potter demonstrates a fitness technique for lengthening the muscles.

the knots," she said.

"You always start at the origin and go towards the insertion," she continued. "If (a client's) shoulders are tight you always have to start at the hips — it's the things below and above it that need releasing."

Muscle release is one of the

body's muscle memory, release in the body from massage can be short term.

"I can tell which of my clients have been doing ball work between massages," she said. "There's less resistance in their bodies and I can get in easier and deeper."

ers her classes not so much exercise as a self-care technique.

"The key to body rolling is to create space above all else," she said. "Pain or discomfort is always due to a lack of space."

Pam Woolway, lifestyle writer, can be reached