



# CYCLIST'S SELF MASSAGE GUIDE



**VELONOMAD**

BY TIM MARSH

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## About the Exercises

These exercises and tips are provided by Trent Harris, a myotherapist and expert in sports treatments for golfers and cyclists.

Trent developed these techniques specifically for VeloNomad.com readers to aid their general body condition as well as to help recover from events like Etape du Tour, Haute Route and other big events.

These techniques can be easily undertaken - and are intended to be completed - at any time when your body is struggling a bit.

The breathing muscles section is really important, as many of us don't breathe properly, or breathe in a compromised manner when under stress (i.e. a race).

Before you start, check out some massage cream (I use **Nature's Kiss Recovery cream** which is great for recovery and massage - the Arnica in it is awesome).

You can also use a hot rub like **Nature's Kiss Hot Stuff** or any other embrocation cream.

Trent says:

*The importance of self-massage and treatment cannot be underestimated. Years of clinical experience have shown me that both the ability to recover and maintain a good range of motion in frequently used muscles is greatly enhanced when an external, massage-type force is applied to a muscle, as opposed to just stretching that muscle.*

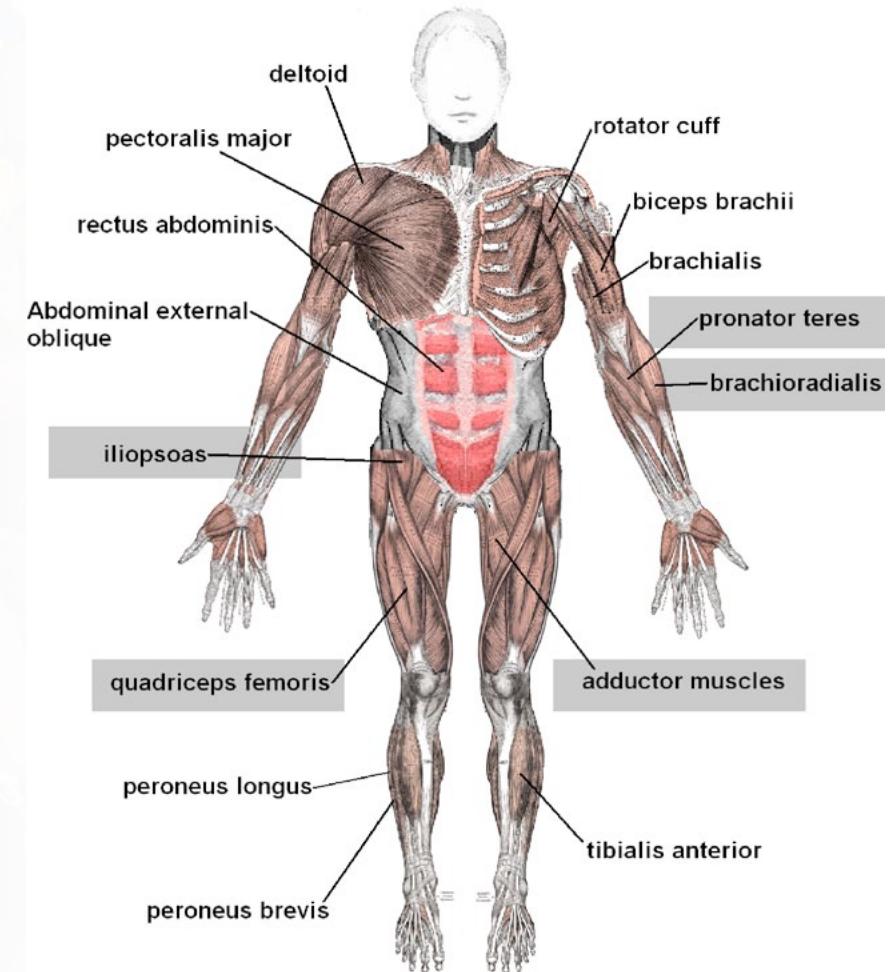
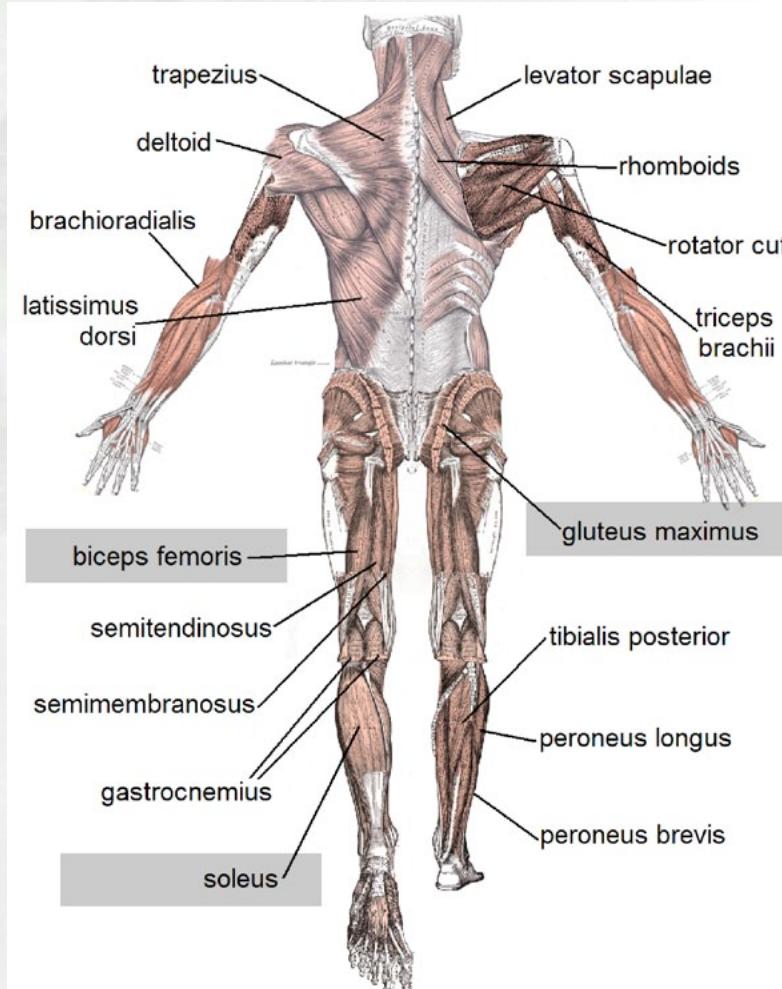
*A simple way to think of muscles is as elastic bands. When a muscle is used strenuously or frequently it can develop trigger points - think of a knot in an elastic band. If you just stretch your elastic band, all the parts of the elastic band that can still stretch will still stretch, making you think you have just done an effective stretch, but in fact the knot has just tightened up.*

*To relieve this trigger point, or knot, the muscle requires pressure and heat. Heat is delivered to the trigger point, i.e. the knot, by increasing blood flow to the area, while the pressure comes from your fingers, a Spikey Ball or a foam roller.*



*The best self-treatment techniques for your overused, tired and sore cycling muscles are outlined on the following pages.*

And now for a quick anatomy lesson. The muscles we focus on are shown in the images below (Source: Wikipedia).



# Methodology - Treat, Then Stretch

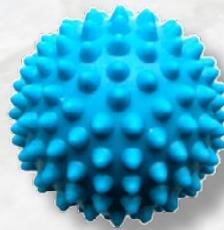
Each muscle should be treated and followed with a stretch to most effectively help the muscle recover. As Trent says, stretching without treatment just tightens the knots in your muscles.

## Self Treatment

Self-treatment allows you to treat ailments yourself without constant visits to a professional, or to treat yourself when you can't get to a professional, such as when you're overseas.

Of course, you will still want to visit your myotherapist, chiropractor, physiotherapist or osteotherapist, but these instructions let you self-treat those constant little niggles in between visits.

You will need the following:



Spikey Ball

- Spikey Ball - available from [spikeyballs.com](http://spikeyballs.com) or Google "Spikey Balls".
- Foam roller - dense foam about 15cm/6" in diameter and 30cm-45cm, [like this](#).

These can be substituted with a baseball or tennis ball and a rolling pin to achieve the same results. I'm telling you now though, a rolling pin on your ITBs is pretty hardcore.

The foam roller and Spikey Ball are light and compact and recommended for travel.

## Stretching

Stretching is absolutely critical for proper body function. If you stretch regularly you will feel a lot better, both mentally and physically.

Stretching the hip flexors and quads is crucial for cyclists, as both can shorten due to the action of cycling. Short hip flexors force the hamstrings to stretch and load your lower back. These muscles are very important to proper body function.

As with all parts of your body, it's a case of use it or lose it. As cyclists get older it is even more imperative they include stretching in their daily routine.



# Glute Medius And Maximus

As the glute medius and maximus tighten, riding becomes a chore. I always notice a big increase in power through my legs after a really good massage on my glutes.

The glutes are put under a lot of load and quickly can tighten. They are a constant source of tightness and irritation for me and require constant work.

I have also included the **Piriformas** in this section, as it can be treated at the same time as the glutes.

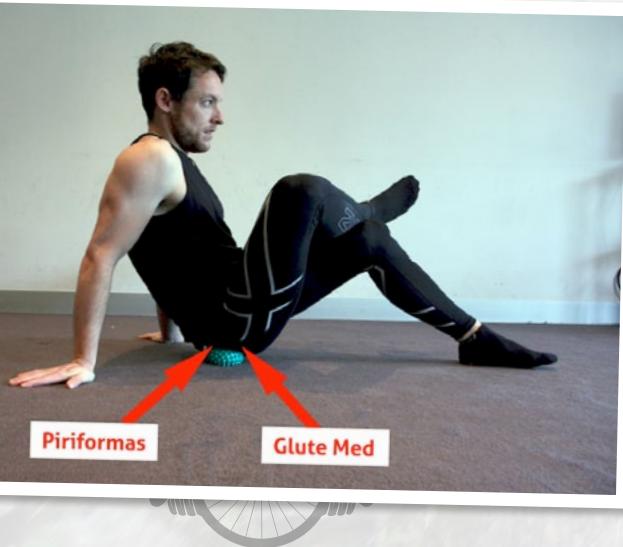
Trent says:

*There are 3 gluteus muscles, all contributing to your ride in different ways. The powerhouse of these is the gluteus maximus, which provides a great deal of power as you bring the pedal over the top and push through it on the down stroke. Whether you are climbing a hill or just putting in a solid effort on the flat, the gluteus maximus is the main force driving you forward. Understandably, being a prime mover in the cycling motion means the glute max will undergo some shortening due to its repeated use. It is important to keep this muscle at a good length to ensure it maintains its ability to function optimally.*

Some of the benefits of having a well functioning glute max include:

- high power generation throughout the pedalling motion
- allowing the hamstring to function correctly and not override the glute max - which will result in much less power being delivered
- allowing better range of motion in the hip to ensure all the relevant muscles can contribute fully to the pedalling motion.

The gluteus medius and minimus are the other gluteal muscles. Together with some other rotators of the hip, such as the piriformis, they play a large role in helping stabilise the hips and trunk. This enables the rider to both maintain equilibrium in the bike, particularly when out of the saddle in a sprint or climb, and ensure muscles such as the gluteus maximus deliver maximal



power output without compromising range of movement.

I recommend the following self-treatment and stretches that release the gluteal muscles and other rotators of the hip, which are often overlooked in many regular stretching programs.

## Self-treatment

To self-treat the glute, the Spikey Ball - or a baseball - ouch- is used. Two areas are targeted here: the glute medius and the piriformas.

Roll the ball gently through the muscles while rocking backward and forward for about 30 seconds on each muscle. If you find tight, painful areas, do 2 or 3 extra small rolls over this area. You are likely to find 2 or 3 in each muscle.

