

Aching back? Give yourself a massage (yes, it's possible)

August 17 2018, by Michelle Mccarthy



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

We've all been there: Your back is aching from sitting in front of a computer all day or perhaps you pulled a muscle during a workout, but you don't have the time or money to get a professional massage.

Fortunately, faculty and [physical therapy](#) students from the USC

Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy are here to help.

Kimiko Yamada, assistant professor of clinical physical therapy, share some insights on what you can do to alleviate the aches.

1. Let tennis balls help you give yourself a massage.

"Place a tennis ball in a long sock, drape it over your shoulder onto your back where you need the pressure and then lean against the wall or a chairback for eight to 10 seconds. You can also tape two tennis balls together and then place one on each side of your spine and lean so they massage the muscles on each side."

2. Roll with a foam roller.

"Use a foam roller to stretch. Lie down on the ground like you're doing snow angels, but with the foam roller along your back. If you can't lie on the ground, then squat against a wall and with the foam roller perpendicular to your spine, roll up and down on the foam roller."

3. Rise and shine, it's stretching time.

"It's a good idea to stretch in the morning. I'll start the day with things that help open up the chest and push the shoulder blades back because everything we do during the day is in front of us. There's not a lot of bringing your shoulders back. It's good to end your day that way, too. Lie with the [foam](#) roller along your back and let gravity push your [shoulder](#) blades back."

4. Give yourself a massage, and someone else, too.

"For caregivers massaging others, you always want to save your thumbs

because they are usually the first part of the joints in our hands that get arthritic and painful. Instead of using your thumbs to press, use a tennis ball. Put your palm flat and push with the tennis ball. That's going to get the pinpoint pressure and not your thumb."

5. Hurts so bad.

"It's not how much pain can you handle when you self-[massage](#). Usually, if it's painful, it starts an inflammatory process in your body that actually makes it worse. When you're massaging yourself, you can lean as hard as you want or go as long as you want on a certain spot."

Provided by University of Southern California

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