

## Trigger point therapy - Information for patients

In principle, pain can be felt in any part of the body. In medicine, for a long time only degenerative joints or trapped nerves had been considered as a reason for pain. In the last few years it has become known that pain often arises from the muscular system. Overuse or stress at work, in sports or during leisure time, are all possible reasons for muscular problems. Pain in the muscular system may be a primary problem or may coexist with such diagnoses as osteoarthritis.

For a long time, the muscular system has been ignored as a cause of pain as often muscular pain is referred away from the muscular source. For example, stomach muscles are often a source of low-back pain and neck muscles may be the cause for a headache. Furthermore, a painful knee can be caused by thigh muscles, and pain in Achilles tendon often has its origin in the calf.

About forty years ago, American scientists found out that misuse of the muscular system may stress or injure certain connections between muscles and nerves, causing muscle fibres to contract. Such a painful contraction knot in the muscle is called a trigger point. Trigger points refer or "trigger" pain. Trigger points can obstruct circulation and trap nerve fibres. In case of persistent irritation, trigger points are capable of causing persistent pain.

The good news is that trigger points are treatable, even after years of irritation/pain. There are different methods to treat trigger points; for example, manual trigger point therapy and dry needling are both well-proven methods. Manual trigger point therapy is the treatment of muscles and connective tissues with specific hands-on techniques. For dry-needling, a sterile acupuncture needle is used to improve the local circulation and to interrupt the referred pain. Other methods include exercise, and modalities such as heat, electrotherapies, Laser and ultrasound. It is important to identify the cause and correct the factors that are causing the trigger points. Your therapist will inform you about the most effective treatment for your problem, but the choice will of course be yours. The sooner your pain is assessed by a professional, the more likely you are to respond to treatment.

Trigger point therapy success also depends on your contribution. Your therapist treats the body parts that provoke the heaviest pain. However, if the pain is too much for you, you may interrupt the treatment at any point by simply saying "stop". It is normal that you may experience post-treatment soreness for 1 or 2 days after a trigger point therapy. The skin might be a little bit irritated by the treatment. Very rarely, there will be a small haematoma (bruise). You can support the healing process by taking a hot shower or a bath after the treatment or you may add a hot pack to the treated body parts. If necessary, you may also take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for 2 or 3 days as medically approved.

Furthermore, all the treated muscles should be carefully stretched 2 or 3 times a day for 30 seconds as directed by your therapist. If it is possible, depending on your pain, it is recommended to exercise 2 times a week. Beyond these recommendations, try to be aware of postures and work situations that cause the pain and try to avoid them. Keep active within your tolerance and limber often.

For further information about trigger point therapy, please contact your therapist or visit our homepage [www.dgs.eu.com](http://www.dgs.eu.com)

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