

Dry Needling

What is Dry Needling?

Dry needling is part of your treatment plan to help you regain muscle mobility and feel less pain.

Your physical therapist puts a thin filament needle into the sensitive area of your muscle (trigger point) or tissue. This helps you move easier and can help relieve pain.

The process is called dry needling because the needles do not have medicine in them.

It can be used with other treatments to reduce pain and improve mobility in areas such as your neck, back, buttock, hip, shoulder and leg.

There are two types of dry needling:

☐ **deep dry needling**

This is used in muscles to release what's known as myofascial trigger points.

These are sites in muscles where part of the muscle is tightened (contraction).

This squeezes the blood vessels causing oxygen to be cut off to the area. This can cause inflammation, can lead to pain and changes how well a joint moves.

Your physical therapist inserts a thin needle into the muscle tissue to target and release the trigger point.

☐ **superficial dry needling**

This is often used in tissues (not into the muscle), including on the surface of bones.

It can be used for pain relief if you cannot or do not want to take pain medicine.

It can also be used in areas with tightness from scar tissue.

Your physical therapist inserts a thin needle into the tissues near the surface of your skin.

Is it Safe?

Dry needling is safe. Your physical therapist (PT) uses sterile needles. Each needle is only used one time. Your PT will be careful to avoid applying the needles to certain areas, such as near the lungs, blood vessels and nerves.

Is it Right for You?

In general, you should not have dry needling if you have:

- a fear of needles
- a metal allergy
- an infection in the affected area
- lymphedema in the arm or leg or affected area.

Talk with your physical therapist if dry needling is right if you:

- have hemophilia
- are HIV-positive
- take anticoagulant (blood-thinning) medicine
- are pregnant (especially the first trimester).

(over)

When Does the Pain Relief Start?

Some people have pain relief right away. Most people feel increased soreness for a few days and then notice a reduction in pain and tension after the soreness goes away.

How Long Does the Pain Relief Last?

Pain relief can last months to years, depending on if you start to move better and have balanced your muscle strength and tension.

Are There Possible Side Effects or Risks?

Possible side effects include:

- pain during needling of trigger point
- soreness in area needled after treatment
- fatigue (feeling very tired)
- fainting
- euphoria (intense feeling of happiness) or aggression
- infection at the needle site
- bleeding
- needle that becomes stuck, bent or broken
- injury to the covering around your heart (pericardium)
- collapsed lung

— Symptoms include:

- chest pain, tightness or both
- problems breathing
- dry cough
- racing heart rate
- blue lips and flaring of nostrils when breathing
- anxiety.

— What to do if you have any symptoms:

- Call your physical therapist and tell them what your symptoms are.
- Go to a hospital Emergency Department.

What Do You Need To Do After Dry Needling?

Move and stretch the area as directed. Your physical therapist may give you exercises to stretch tight muscles or to strengthen weaker muscles.

What Can You Do if Dry Needling is Not for You?

Your physical therapist will give you options such as:

- applying pressure on or stretching your trigger point
- using electrical stimulation to help reduce pain or spasm
- using cold therapy or ice to reduce pain or spasm
- showing you exercises to improve the flexibility of tight muscles and strengthening weakened muscles.

Whom to Call With Questions

Call your Courage Kenny clinic if you have questions about your treatment.