



# Trigger Point Therapy

If you're experiencing muscle pain, you may benefit from trigger point therapy. This is a type of massage that focuses on specific areas of the body that are known to cause pain. This guide will teach you everything you need to know about trigger point therapy, including what causes them, how to find them, and how to treat them.

## What is Trigger Point Therapy

Trigger point therapy is a type of massage designed to trigger point pain in specific areas of the body. These points, also called knots, are usually located in muscle tissue, and can cause pain when they become irritated or inflamed. Often, this pain is felt in other parts of the body as well due to the way that the nervous system is connected.

## What Is a Trigger Point

A trigger point is a pressure-sensitive area in the muscle that is frequently linked with pain and stiffness. Trigger points can be extremely painful, limiting your range of motion and making it difficult to do your daily activities.

## Different Types of Trigger Points

There are three types of trigger points: active, passive, and satellite. Active trigger points are painful when touched and can cause pain in other areas of the body. Passive trigger points are not always painful when touched but may cause pain in other areas of the body. Satellite trigger points are like active ones but are not as painful.

Trigger points can occur anywhere in the body but are most common in the neck, shoulders, back, and hips. Everyone may get them, although some individuals get a greater amount or have more discomfort from them. Moreover, no one is sure what causes them.

## What Makes a Trigger Point Painful

Theoretically, trigger points are taut bands of muscle and fascia tissue that become rigid. Hence, they restrict blood flow to muscle tissue. When this happens, muscle tissue is put into a state of metabolic crisis.

The muscle needs oxygen and other nutrients to heal. However, due to the tightness, oxygen and nutrients can't reach the muscle. The cycle of pain, less blood flow, and pain start and can be hard to break.



However, the pain from a trigger point can vary depending on the individual. For some people, it may feel like a dull ache, while for others, it may be more of sharp pain. The pain may also radiate from the trigger point to other areas of the body. For example, a trigger point in the shoulder may cause pain to radiate down the arm.

Moreover, here are a few things that can increase your risk of developing trigger points, although there are many more:

- Tight muscles
- Poor posture
- Inactivity or too much activity
- Muscle overuse or injury
- Stressful lifestyle
- Depression and Anxiety
- Generalized Fatigue

## How To Check If You Have Trigger Points

If you're unsure whether you have a trigger point, there are some tell-tale signs and symptoms. Here's a quick checklist:

- Do you have localized pain in your muscles?
- Is the pain worse when pressure is applied to the muscle?
- Do you experience referring pain, meaning that the pain radiates from the trigger point to another area of your body?
- Is the pain worse at certain times of the day or after certain activities?
- Do you have a reduced range of motion in the affected muscle?
- Do you feel fatigued in the affected muscle?
- Does the muscle feel tight or knotted?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, you might have a trigger point. Trigger points can be painful and frustrating, but there are treatments available.

## How Trigger Point Therapy Works

Our muscles are made up of individual muscle cells called myocytes. These myocytes are held together by a protein called collagen. The collagen forms a sheath around the muscle cell. This collagen sheath is called the endomysium. The endomysium also attaches each muscle cell to its neighbor. So, if you were to take a cross-section of muscle, it would look kind of like a bunch of hot dogs all lined up next to each other, with the collagen sheath holding them all together.

Now, let's talk about what happens when a muscle gets tight or knotted. When a muscle gets tight, it's usually because one or more of the individual muscle cells has become shortened.



This can happen for a variety of reasons, but the most common is simply overuse. When a muscle cell becomes shortened, it pulls on the collagen sheath, which pulls on the neighboring muscle cells. This can cause the entire muscle to become tight and knotted.

So, how does trigger point massage therapy work? By applying pressure to the knots in the muscle, we can release the tension in the individual muscle cells. This allows the muscle to return to its normal length. As the muscle cells return to their normal length, the pressure on the collagen sheath is released, and the neighboring muscle cells are no longer being pulled. This can provide relief from pain and tension in the muscle.

If you're dealing with tight muscles, trigger point massage therapy may be a good option for you.

## **Different Methods of Trigger Point Therapy**

Before discussing the different Trigger Point Therapy techniques, it's essential to discuss a frequent approach to alleviate muscular ailments: muscle stretching.

Stretching the muscles alone isn't effective for relieving trigger point pain. Moreover, it may only worsen the pain. Hence, it should be avoided as a trigger point therapy method.

Nevertheless, there are several efficient trigger point therapy procedures that include muscular stretching. All these procedures use augmentation measures that significantly enhance the clinical efficacy of stretching.

### **Manual Trigger Point Therapy**

Manual Trigger Point Therapy is one of the most popular and well-known types of massage. It's a great way to relieve pain and tension in your body, and it can be done by yourself or with the help of a partner.

Trigger point therapy is based on the theory that certain points in your muscles can become tight and irritated, which can cause pain in other parts of your body. By applying pressure to these points, you can relieve the pain and tension.

There are a few different techniques that you can use to find and apply pressure to these trigger points. One can use your fingers or a tennis ball to massage the muscle. Another is to use a foam roller.

To find the trigger points, you can either feel for them yourself or have someone else do it for you. Once you've found them, you'll want to apply pressure for 20-30 seconds and then release. You can repeat this process several times until the pain has subsided.



Manual trigger point therapy is a great way to relieve pain and tension in your body. It's safe and effective and can be done by yourself or with the help of a partner. If you're looking for a way to reduce stress and improve your overall health, consider trying this technique.

## **Spray and Stretch**

Dr. Travell created the Spray and Stretch trigger point release technique. It entails spraying on a surface anesthetic while stretching the muscle group comprising the trigger point.

The spray is applied to the area of the skin where trigger points cause discomfort. It also momentarily blocks (or distracts) the neurological system's sense of pain. The actual loosening of the trigger point is accomplished by stretching the muscle. Moreover, the spray's ability to inhibit the pain reaction allows the stretch to relax the trigger point.

Spray and Stretch is a very powerful technique for relieving trigger points. But its therapeutic use needs significant expertise to be truly effective.

## **Trigger Point Pressure Release and Micro-stripping Treatments**

This method is often referred to as ischemic compression. It's a release method that is frequently used and includes applying precise hand pressure to relax the muscle tension at a trigger point. Moreover, this technique has two efficient variations:

### **Sustain Pressure Approach**

The sustained pressure approach requires the therapist to touch the trigger point with their thumb, fingertip, elbow, or trigger point tool. Then, gradually apply pressure, maintain it for 4 to 8 seconds, and release it gradually. The therapist typically performs the application of pressure three to six times.

### **Micro-stripping Release Technique**

The micro-stripping release technique entails applying a brief stripping stroke over the trigger point. It utilizes a supported thumb contact (thumb-over-thumb). This approach is quite successful in releasing the trigger point's constricted fibers.

In this approach, the therapist puts pressure on the trigger point on one side. Then, the pressure is gently transferred to the opposite side of the trigger point. It's important to note that the action never slides across the skin. Instead, the skin is moved across the muscle underneath.

## **Benefits of Trigger Point Therapy**



Trigger point treatment has several advantages, making it an excellent alternative to conventional pain management approaches. Fortunately, many people experience immediate relief after just one trigger point massage. Here are some of the most significant advantages:

### **Better Circulation**

Improved circulation is one advantage of trigger point therapy. When muscles are taut, they might impede blood circulation. This may result in various issues, including tiredness, headaches, and vertigo. Trigger point treatment may assist in releasing contracted muscles and enhancing circulation. This may assist enhance your energy levels and general health.

### **Reduced Stress and Tension**

Muscle tension may also contribute to stress and tension. Trigger point therapy may help alleviate tension and stress by releasing knots in the muscles. This can result in an overall sense of relaxation.

### **Increased Mobility and Flexibility**

If your muscles are stiff, it may be difficult to move freely. This might reduce your range of motion and make it challenging to perform daily tasks. Trigger point treatment may assist in relaxing tense muscles and enhancing mobility.

Additionally, tight muscles might make it challenging to accomplish a complete range of motion. This might restrict your mobility and make some tasks difficult. Trigger point treatment may assist in releasing contracted muscles and increasing flexibility.

### **Higher Energy Levels**

When your muscles are tense, it may drain your vitality. This is because the body must compensate for the tightness by working harder. Trigger point treatment may assist in releasing contracted muscles and boosting energy levels.

### **Better Sleep**

Additionally, tight muscles might make sleeping difficult. This is because they might induce pain and discomfort, making falling and maintaining sleep hard. Trigger point treatment may assist in releasing contracted muscles and enhancing sleep.

### **Pain Relief from A Headache**



The head and neck are one of the most typical locations for tense muscles. This may cause great strain and stress, leading to headaches. Trigger point treatment may assist in the relaxation of tense muscles in the head and neck, hence alleviating headache discomfort.

## **The Drawbacks of Trigger Point Therapy**

Trigger point treatment isn't effective for everyone. In addition, applying pressure on sensitive muscle parts might be painful. Due to the release of pain-inducing chemicals into the circulation, you may experience lethargy for one or two days after treatment while your body processes these compounds. You may also experience discomfort in the treated regions, which may be alleviated with a warm compress.

## **What to Expect at Trigger Point Therapy Session**

First your therapist will examine your health information and symptoms to thoroughly understand your health, activity, and discomfort. Moreover, it's common for clients to have symptoms they have no idea are caused by trigger points. These indicators can help a therapist pinpoint the muscles that need to be treated.

Then, you may have a series of physical examinations, including your posture and muscle strength checks. This will assist your therapist in observing how you move and identifying any muscular anomalies.

After that, it's time for the main event. Next, your therapist will use their hands to locate the distinct tense, bumpy bands of trigger points in your body. Then, they will release the knots by pressing and holding the trigger point.

Don't be alarmed if your practitioner focuses on muscles seemingly unrelated to your problem. Since 80% of trigger points produce pain in other areas, therapists also concentrate on other muscle groups. For example, a trigger point in your neck may tighten the shoulder muscles. Consequently, this reduces the range of motion and causes discomfort in the affected region.

## **How to Prepare for a Trigger Point Therapy Session**

Before you go to your trigger point therapy session, there are a few things that you can do to prepare. First, it's important to wear loose-fitting clothing that will not restrict your movement. You will also want to avoid eating a large meal before your session, as this can make you feel uncomfortable. Drink water so that you are well hydrated.



It's also helpful to have an idea of what areas of your body are causing you pain. This way, you can let the therapist know where to focus their attention. If you have any medical conditions or allergies, be sure to let the therapist know before the session begins.

During the trigger point therapy session, the therapist will use a variety of techniques to release the muscle tension. These techniques can include:

- Pressing on the trigger points
- Stretching the muscles
- Applying heat or cold

The therapist will also have the client engage in treatment by having them express their level of tension on a scale 1-10 while the therapist presses on trigger areas until tension subside.

You may feel a bit of discomfort during the session, but this is normal. The therapist will work with you to ensure that you are comfortable and that the pressure isn't too intense.

After the session, you may feel some soreness in the treated areas. This is also normal and should dissipate within a day or two. If you have any concerns, be sure to follow up with your therapist.

Trigger point therapy can be an effective way to relieve pain and tension in the body. Preparing for your session and knowing what to expect can help ensure you get the most out of your treatment.

## **Are there any Contraindications?**

Yes, as with any form of massage, there are contraindications (reasons you should not have a massage). You should NOT have a trigger point therapy massage if you have any of the following conditions:

- Contagious diseases (including the common cold and influenza)
- Are under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Have had a recent surgery (within the last 6 months)
- Neuritis (nerve inflammation)
- Infectious skin disease
- Acute inflammation
- Bone and joint injuries
- Fever
- Open wounds
- Myositis Ossificans
- Deep-vein thrombosis
- Tumors



- Hemophilia
- Diabetes (seek permission from your GP)
- Periostitis
- Muscle and/or Tendon Rupture
- Atherosclerosis
- Edema
- People taking blood-thinning medications

Some contraindications only apply to localized areas of your body. You may be able to have a deep tissue massage, but the therapist will need to avoid the area. Local contraindications include:

- Undiagnosed lumps and bumps
- Bruising and abrasions
- Burns including sunburn
- Pain without known cause
- Acute inflammation
- Varicose veins

## **What To Do After a Tigger Point Therapy Massage**

- Schedule a follow-up massage appointment ...
- Drink plenty of water after the massage ...
- Eat nutritious meals after the massage ...
- Avoid drinking alcohol and coffee ...
- Take a warm bath after the massage ...
- Relax and make sure you get enough sleep ...
- Avoid running or exercising immediately after the massage...
- Do some gentle stretching ...