

Intramuscular Manual Therapy: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Intramuscular Manual Therapy?

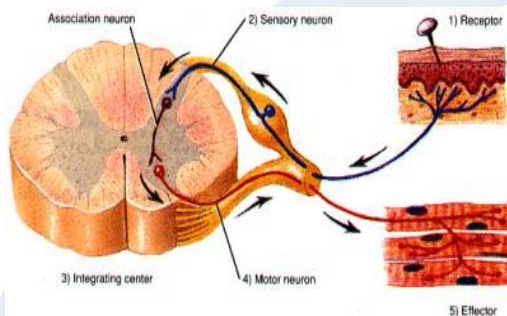
Intramuscular Manual Therapy is also known as trigger point dry needling. It is an invasive procedure in which a solid filament needle is inserted into the skin and muscle directly at a myofascial trigger point. Physical therapists utilize dry needling in the treatment of myofascial pain. A myofascial trigger point consists of multiple contraction knots, which are related to the production and maintenance of the pain cycle.



Is Intramuscular Manual Therapy similar to acupuncture?

There are many similarities and differences between Intramuscular Manual Therapy and acupuncture. Licensed physical therapists in a growing number of states can use Intramuscular Manual Therapy under the scope of their practice. Dry needling also falls within the scope of acupuncture practice. Physical therapists at One on One Physical Therapy are not licensed acupuncturists and do not practice acupuncture. In contrast to most schools of acupuncture, Intramuscular Manual Therapy is strictly based on Western medicine principles and research.

How does Intramuscular Manual Therapy work?



The exact mechanisms of Intramuscular Manual Therapy are unknown. There are mechanical and biochemical effects. Based on the pioneering studies by Dr. Jay Shah and colleagues at the National Institute of Health, we know that inserting a needle into trigger points can cause favorable biochemical changes, which assist in reducing pain. It is essential to elicit the so-called local twitch responses, which are spinal cord reflexes. Getting local twitch responses with Intramuscular Manual Therapy is the first step in breaking the pain cycle.

What type of problems can be treated with Intramuscular Manual Therapy?

Intramuscular Manual Therapy can be used for a variety of musculoskeletal problems. Muscles are thought to be a primary contributing factor to the symptoms. Such conditions include, but are not limited to neck, back, and shoulder pain, arm pain (tennis elbow, carpal tunnel, golfer's elbow), headache to include migraines and tension-type headaches, jaw pain, buttock pain and leg pain (sciatica, hamstring strains, calf tightness/spasms). The treatment of muscles has the greatest effect on reducing the pain mechanisms in the nervous system.

Is the procedure painful?

Most patients do not feel the insertion of the needle. The local twitch response elicits a very brief (less than a second) painful response. Some patients describe this as a little electric shock; others feel it more like a cramping sensation. Again, the therapeutic response occurs with the elicitation of local twitch responses and that is a good and desirable reaction.

Are the needles sterile?

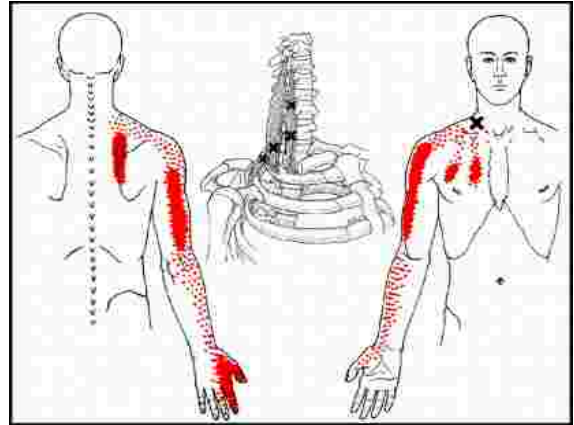
Yes, we only use sterile needles.

What side effects can I expect after the treatment?

Most patients report being sore after the procedure. The soreness is described as muscle soreness over the area treated and into the areas of referred symptoms. Typically, the soreness lasts between a few hours and two days.

What should I do after having the procedure done?

Our recommendations vary depending on the amount of soreness you have and on the individual response to the treatment. Recommendations may include applying heat or ice over the area, gentle stretches and modifications of activities.



How long does it take for the procedure to work?

Typically, it takes several visits for a positive reaction to take place. Again, we are trying to cause mechanical and biochemical changes without any pharmacological means. Therefore, we are looking for a cumulative response to achieve a certain threshold after which the pain cycle is disturbed.

Why is my doctor not familiar with Intramuscular Manual Therapy?

In the US, Intramuscular Manual Therapy is a relatively new method for treating myofascial pain and not everyone is already aware of this effective modality. Feel free to inform your doctor about this treatment option. It is upon all of us to educate others about new and innovative ways to treat pain.

Where does Intramuscular Manual Therapy fit into the entire rehabilitation program?

Generally speaking, Intramuscular Manual Therapy is the modality of choice when it comes to treating patients in the clinic. More frequently, Intramuscular Manual Therapy is needed in the beginning in order to break the pain cycle. Once that is achieved, other treatment options are introduced.

Once I am feeling better, how often to do I need to come back to maintain my progress?

The musculoskeletal system is under constant pressure from gravity, stress, work etc. A regular exercise program combined with good posture can prevent many problems. If the pain comes back, “tune-ups” are recommended to treat and prevent serious injuries.

Where can I get more information about the procedure and the people that are licensed to perform it?

Visit www.painpoints.com and choose “For Patients” and then “Helpful Resources.”

