

What is a Trigger Point?

A trigger point (TrP) is a site of exaggerated contraction that is extremely tender within a tightly drawn band of muscle. It feels like a lump or as you may commonly hear it call "a knot."

What causes Trigger Points?

Remember these three words

Overuse

Overload

Overweight

The first, overuse, refers to anything you may do repetitively or for long periods of time. Poor posture, for instance, can stress muscles enough to cause trigger points. Other examples are typing or using the computer mouse, painting, or even sitting which continuously use specific muscle groups sometimes beyond reasonable expectations.

The second, overload, refers to anything you may carry during the day whether it be a purse, briefcase, backpack, or the weight of the world on your shoulders. All of these things, regardless of the actual weight in pounds, when carried (especially repetitively) can cause the body to fall out of balance and cause overload to lead to overuse.

Lastly, being overweight will consistently make muscles work in a way they were not designed to or result in increased work to allow the body to perform its normal functions, Extra pounds leads to overload and overuse.

Not all causes of trigger points are within our control, however. Any injury resulting from sports, car accidents, or falls of any kind cause muscle damage that can be ignored or unnoticed. If injuries are not properly treated, TrPs result and may sometimes cause more pain than the initial injury.

I've heard that trigger points can cause "referred pain". What is Referred Pain?

Trigger points in muscles have the ability to create a variety of feelings ranging from a dull ache to sharp pain- constant or occasional- in parts of the body that may appear to be far from or totally unrelated to the source of the pain. An excellent example is that TrPs in muscles of the shoulder and neck are known to cause headaches or earaches. These referrals of pain follow generally predictable patterns. By describing the pain to your doctor or myofascial therapist, the source of the pain may be located.

Referred "pain" may not be the best description. These referrals can also manifest as numbness, tingling, dizziness, burning, or even nausea. Have you noticed any of these symptoms?

Is there always referred pain with the presence of trigger points?

No. Tenderness or pain can be localized and confined to the area of the TrP.

Do trigger points go away?

It depends. The first obstacle is to locate them if they are present. Second, it is helpful to determine how the TrPs came to be. If work or habits that are not likely to change are the cause, the process will surely take longer. Dedication, the correct changes to life patterns, and proper care from your chiropractor or myofascial therapist can drastically increase the chances of releasing trigger points in overused or overloaded muscles.