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Trigger Point Therapy

What is Trigger Point Therapy (TPT)?

Trigger point therapy is a form of manual therapy that focuses on detecting and releasing trigger points. Located in the skeletal muscle, trigger points are spots that produce pain when compressed. In many cases, trigger points form as a result of trauma to the muscle fibres.

What is a Myofascial Trigger Point?

Clinically, myofascial trigger points are easily identified as painful areas in a muscle. These microscopic changes occur in muscle fibres causing them to contract and chronically shorten. This is usually due to the overloading or incorrect loading of the muscle. Some theories suggest that oxygen and nutrients that are supplied to the trigger point are constantly compromised. This leads to a sustained contraction, that is unable to resolve itself.

Muscle inflammation can be caused by repetitive strain, lack of muscle activity or direct muscle injury. Once muscles are stressed or injured, they often form tender trigger points that feel like dense tight knots in the muscle tissue. Pressure on a trigger point causes the muscle fibre to shorten and be painful to the touch. Touching this point can send referred pain radiating out to other areas of the body. For example, pressure on a trigger point in the trapezius at the top of your shoulder can refer pain up the side of your neck and head, triggering headache pain. Additionally, to pressure, activity and stress can also aggravate trigger point pain.

Two types of trigger points:

1. An active trigger point is a knot of muscle that is extremely tender and causes local or regional referred pain.
2. A latent trigger point generally does not cause pain unless you press on it but has the potential to become active if aggravated by muscle overload, fatigue, illness or stress.

What are trigger point causes?

There are couple of theories on what causes trigger points:

1. The first suggests that trigger points develop through overuse of the affected tissue. Latent trigger points on the other side are suggested to develop in underused tissue.
2. The second suggests that the taut bands of tissue that cause trigger points are contracted muscle fibres that were previously damaged due to trauma.
3. The third suggests that it may be an area of increased metabolism and decreased circulation.



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Various factors have been found to increase the activation of painful trigger points, for example muscle constriction, stress, poor diet, metabolic diseases, and excessive exercise without adequate rest.

When will practitioners use trigger point therapy?

Practitioners will use trigger point therapy once they identify one of the following four criteria:

- A tight band (muscle fibre bundle) in the muscle
- A pressure sensitive area within the taut band
- Referred pain from a trigger point
- A local twitch response of the trigger point or tight band in response to mechanical stimulation of the trigger point

Who will make use of trigger point therapy?

A number of healthcare providers are trained in TPT, including:

- Chiropractors
- Physiotherapists
- Massage therapists
- Osteopathic practitioners
- Biokineticists

What is the benefit of trigger point therapy?

- There are numerous benefits of trigger point therapy. The goals of myofascial trigger point therapy is to improve blood circulation to the trigger point area, stretching of tight bands and releasing surrounding fasciae.
- It is effective in reducing headaches, muscle tension, improving range of motion and adding to one's flexibility.
- Trigger point therapy also has a positive effect on improving individuals' posture and relieving muscle pain.

How does trigger point therapy work?

The objective of trigger point therapy is releasing or softening a muscle knot to reduce (or eliminate) the knot pain and associated pain. The release happens by applying various levels of pressure to muscle knots, and then stretching the affected areas through a complete range of motion. Making the muscle trigger points and associated pain is complicated, but the process of relaxing the trigger points is simple.



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Benefits of trigger point therapy:

- Increased flexibility
- Increased range of motion
- Decreased lower back pain
- Improved chronic neck pain
- Relief of tension headaches
- Management of carpal tunnel
- Management of shin splints
- Management of plantar fasciitis
- Management of tennis elbow
- Improvement of sciatic symptoms
- Active release technique vs. similar treatments

Ways to avoid a trigger point therapy session:

Exercise: whether you prefer strength training or stretching, moving your body regularly keeps your muscle tissue supple.

Sitting: avoid sitting for long periods of time; get up and move every hour at least.

Massage: make sure you get a monthly massage to help you relax, improve flexibility, and maintain healthy muscles.

Conclusion:

Also referred to as myofascial trigger point therapy or neuromuscular therapy, trigger point therapy is used to treat pain-related conditions. Various practitioners use this technique successfully daily in their practices to bring instant relief to aching muscle tissue and resolve referred pain by releasing an active pressure point.

For more information on the above article or to speak to an EPT representative, kindly contact > admin@eptrecovery.com