



Newsletter



▶ *May/June*



TRIGGER POINTS



What is a trigger point?

Trigger points are a very common cause of musculoskeletal pain and even disability. They are hyperirritable spots that are found in skeletal muscle. They can cause pain locally or in specific referred patterns away from the actual point. They can also lead to decreased range of motion in affected muscles or nearby joints (e.g. neck, shoulders, hips). They can be active (pain at rest, usually with referred pain) or latent (pain generally only with palpation, but can still cause muscle weakness or decreased range of motion).

Trigger points can be caused by acute trauma, repetitive microtrauma, or poor posture.

How are trigger points diagnosed?

Trigger points are diagnosed clinically, without the need for imaging. Palpation of the trigger point will reproduce pain and will often cause radiation. Pressing the trigger point will also often cause a "twitch response" (muscle twitching without contraction).

What is the treatment for trigger points?

- ▶ Identifying and treating predisposing factors- changing work station to improve posture; stretching hip flexors plus core strengthening to improve posture through the lower back; stretching chest musculature plus upper back strengthening to improve posture
- ▶ Manual therapy- e.g. digital ischemic pressure (pressing on the trigger point to deliberately block blood supply so that the blood flow will increase upon release)
- ▶ Dry needling (intramuscular stimulation)
- ▶ Medications- anti-inflammatories, muscle relaxants, certain antidepressants (that have an effect on pain as well)
- ▶ Injections- local anaesthetic, saline, or steroid

