

Trigger Point Injection

What is a trigger point injection?

A trigger point injection is an injection (shot) into a painful area of muscle. Normal muscles tighten and relax as you use them. A **trigger point** is a tight knot or band of muscle that forms when a muscle will not relax. They can be very painful. An injection into the trigger point can help it relax and relieve the pain.

Many patients receive a series of trigger point injections, usually a few weeks apart.

Why do I need it?

Trigger points can cause spasms or pain in a muscle, or cause “referred pain” in another part of the body. The pain can affect posture, cause weakness, and reduce your range of motion. Trigger points can be caused by a number of conditions, including:

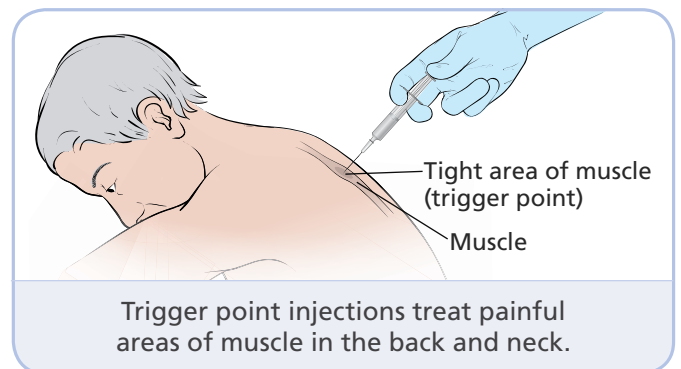
- Problems with posture
- Imbalances in muscle strength and flexibility
- Muscle-related conditions, such as **myofascial** [mahy-oh-FASH-uhl] **pain syndrome** (regional muscle pain that does not seem to be caused by injury to the spine, a tendon, or a joint), or **fibromyalgia** [fahy-broh-mahy-AL-juh] (chronic muscle-based pain in the upper and lower body)
- Muscle injuries or repetitive use injuries



How do I prepare?

There are a few things you can do to make your procedure go better:

- 1 Medicine changes.** You may be asked to stop taking certain medicines, such as blood thinners (such as Coumadin), before the procedure. Be sure to check with your doctor before stopping any medicines.
- 2 Medicine list.** On the day of the procedure, bring a list of all your current medicines. This includes over-the-counter medicines and vitamins.
- 3 X-rays or other images.** Bring these on the day of the procedure as well.
- 4 Medical history.** Be sure to tell your doctor about any history of allergic reaction to medicines.



Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May relieve pain • Allows fast recovery • Does not require hospital stay 	<p>Complications are rare, but can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bleeding or infection. These are risks with any injection. • Nerve injury. The needle may hit a nerve that could cause pain. • Puncture. When a muscle near the ribcage receives a trigger point injection, there is a small risk of puncturing a lung or the membrane that surrounds the lung. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretching • Posture correction • Heat or cold packs • Medicines • Physical therapy • Massage

What happens during the injection?

Trigger point injections can be done in a doctor's office. The actual injection takes only a few minutes, but plan on 30 to 60 minutes for the whole procedure. You will remain awake and able to communicate the entire time. These steps will be part of your procedure:

- 1 Positioning.** Depending on where you will have the injection, you will be sitting or lying down.
- 2 Numbing the skin.** You may be given a local anesthetic near the injection site.
- 3 Injection.** A small needle will be inserted into the trigger point. The injection will contain a local anesthetic that sometimes includes a steroid, a medicine used to reduce inflammation. If you are allergic to the medicine, a dry-needle technique (involving no medications) can be used.
- 4 Brief pain.** The injection may cause some pain that can last from a few seconds to a few minutes.
- 5 Pain relief.** The injection will allow the trigger point to relax.
- 6 Additional injections.** Multiple trigger points may be injected in one visit.

What happens after the injection?

You will be monitored in the doctor's office for up to 20 minutes after the procedure. This allows the doctor to make sure you don't have reactions to the medicine or the injection.

- If the injection is into an arm or leg, someone else may need to drive you home. Do not drive if you feel faint or confused.
- The injection may provide pain relief immediately for a few hours and cause local numbness.
- You may feel sore around the area for a few days. Your doctor may recommend that you put ice on it for short periods of time.

How do I care for myself?

Here are some tips to help ensure that you recover properly from your injection:

- **It is very important to stretch** the treated area during the first day after the injection. Ask your doctor for stretching exercises that will help you heal.
- **You should do gentle exercises and stretching** as your doctor prescribes in the few days after the injection.
- Be sure to **follow up with your doctor** to see how you're responding to the injection and to make any changes to your rehabilitation program.

What can I expect for pain relief?

Trigger point injections have been found to be effective in relieving pain, especially when combined with exercise and medicine. In many patients, the pain will decrease, and in some patients, the pain may go away. If there is a reduction but not an elimination of your pain, your doctor may recommend additional injections.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you have:

- Redness, pus, or swelling at the injection site
- Ongoing numbness or weakness
- Difficulty breathing

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