

Trigger Point Dry Needling

What is trigger point dry needling?

During **trigger point dry needling (TPDN)**, needles are inserted into painful areas of muscles known as trigger points. These trigger points, or knots in a muscle, form when muscles do not relax or are overused.

TPDN involves placing a small needle (without medication) into the muscle at or near the trigger point in order to help decrease pain, prevent muscle spasms, and improve muscle activity. The treatment is called “dry” needling because the needle itself stimulates the tissue, and nothing is injected.

What are the benefits of TPDN?

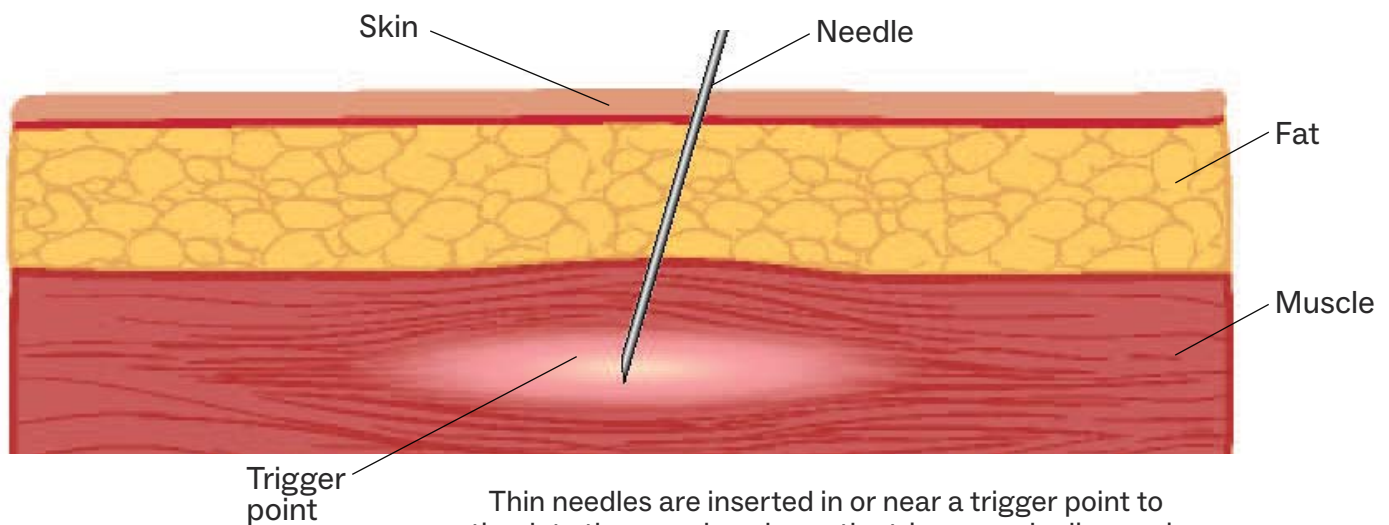
TPDN may be an option for treating pain, muscle stiffness, or spasms. Your physical therapist may use other treatments to enhance TPDN, including manual therapy, exercise, and stretching.

What are the risks of TPDN?

Like any treatment, there are possible risks. While these are rare, they are real and must be considered.

Infection is a risk whenever a needle is put into the skin. Please tell your physical therapist if you have any conditions that can be transferred by blood or if you have an immune deficiency.

Puncture of a lung (pneumothorax) is a rare complication and the most serious risk associated with TPDN. The main symptom of lung puncture is shortness of breath. It may last for several days to weeks. A more severe lung puncture can require hospitalization and reinflation of the lung.



Thin needles are inserted in or near a trigger point to stimulate the muscle, release the trigger, and relieve pain.

How do I prepare for TPDN?

Let your physical therapist know if you could be pregnant, have any known infections, have a fear of needles, are on any blood-thinning medications, have a suppressed immune system (your immune system isn't working properly), or have a history of lymphedema.

Talk with your insurance company to see if they cover TPDN. If not, you may need to cover the costs.

What can I expect?

Your physical therapist will insert small needles into your trigger points. For some people, the needle insertion is painless while others may feel mild discomfort or pressure.

You may have several sites treated in one visit.

What are the side effects?

Possible side effects (negative reactions) include:

- **Bruising**, which is common and should not be a concern unless you are taking a blood thinner. The needles are very small and do not have a cutting edge, so significant tissue injury from TPDN is extremely unlikely.
- **Muscle soreness**, which should go away within 24 hours.
- **Dizziness or nausea**, which may occur immediately but shouldn't last too long.

What happens after TPDN?

Dry needling should be done in combination with other treatments. Your physical therapist will provide other treatments that may include manual therapy, exercise, or stretching to help with your pain.

You should be able to resume your normal activities based on your comfort level.

If you choose to exercise after your dry needling session, be sure to take it easy as your muscles may be tired and sore.

When should I call my physical therapist?

Call your physical therapist if you have:

- Soreness lasting for longer than 2 days or your symptoms are getting worse.
- Bleeding or bruising issues.
- Heat, redness, swelling, or drainage at the site of the treatment.

If you have trouble breathing, or you have chest pain or pressure, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Notes

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