

## Trigger Point Injections: Information and Instructions

What is a trigger point? Areas of muscle that are in constant spasm can cause severe pain with movement or if pressure is applied over them. These areas are called trigger points because they can “trigger” or cause pain. Pressing on a trigger point may also cause referred pain (pain in another part of the body) by irritating the adjacent nerves.

What causes trigger points? Trigger points can be caused by a number of conditions, including:

- Muscle tension conditions, such as myofascial pain syndrome (chronic pain that surrounds muscle tissue), or fibromyalgia, (chronic pain in the muscles of soft tissues surrounding joints)
- Tension headaches
- Muscle injuries or repetitive use injuries
- Spine conditions such as herniated discs, pinched nerves, and fractures

What are the symptoms of trigger points? Trigger points can cause pain, numbness, tingling, burning, muscle spasms, and a persistent sense of tightness. Trigger points in the neck or upper back can cause headaches, or facial pain. Trigger points in the shoulder area can cause pain, numbness, or tingling into the arms and fingers, and at times, may even cause chest pain. Trigger points in the lower back may cause these symptoms radiating down the legs or into the abdomen. Trigger points can cause pain at the site or radiate to other areas.

How can trigger points be treated? If possible, the source of the trigger points, such as repetitive motion, should be reduced or eliminated. Certain medications may be appropriate such as anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen, naproxen), or short-term muscle relaxants if there are spasms. Trigger point injections may decrease the amount of pain that you are experiencing even if they do not get rid of your pain permanently or completely. The injections may provide significant pain relief so that you may participate in physical therapy without being hindered by pain.

How are trigger point injections given? The provider will examine you and press on the affected area to determine where the trigger point(s) are located. The provider will mark the area(s) to be injected. After cleaning the skin, the provider will place the needle into the trigger point(s). When the needle is in place, the medication (either saline or local anesthetic) will be injected and the needle removed.

Who should not have trigger point injections? Please let your provider know if:

- You have an infection or are taking antibiotics
- You are taking any blood thinners such as Warfarin, Plavix, Heparin etc
- You are pregnant or might be pregnant

What can I expect for pain relief? Trigger point injections have been found to be very effective in relieving pain, especially when combined with exercise and medication. A reduction in pain means that it may be possible to move more easily, and this in itself can help break the cycle of pain and stiffness. In general, if your pain is reduced even for short periods, you may be able to do your exercises and cope with your pain better in the long term. In most cases, a follow-up visit to determine how effective the injections were for your pain will be necessary before another round of injections.

## After Care Instructions

### How should I care for myself after trigger point injections?

1. Continue to take your medications as prescribed.
2. You may resume your regular daily activities. Avoid overdoing, or doing things you have not done for some time such as lifting or heavy housework.
3. Continue with any prescribed exercises, especially range of motion and stretching.
4. You may feel sore around the area for a day or two. If necessary, apply hot/cold packs for 15 minutes each, 2 to 3 times per day for the next few days.
5. You may feel numb in the area injected for about an hour after the procedure. You may also get a bruise at the site of the injection.
6. In the first day after the procedure, it's important to stretch the treated area. Ask your doctor for stretching exercises that will help you heal.
7. Call us if you have: • Redness, pus, or swelling at the injection • Ongoing numbness or weakness • Fever.