

Dry Needling using Acupuncture Needles

What is Dry Needling?

Dry needling is the application of very fine acupuncture needles to trigger points (or irritable spots) in muscles. The same fine needles may also be placed in other areas away from the source of pain if it is too sensitive. The aim is to reduce the tension/spasm and pain emanating from these trigger points and thus help the muscles function normally.

What is the actual process?

There are a couple of ways of doing the needling and this influences the actual experience.

Firstly, there is application of the fine needle 'in-situ' where it is placed into the area and left for between 10 and 20 minutes.

Secondly, there is 'deep stimulation' where the fine needle is placed deeper into the trigger point and often there is a local muscle twitch. These may be left for only a minute or up to five minutes.

Is it painful?

For most people the first part of the needle actually going in is not painful at all. At times there is a sharp feeling but the needle is so fine (and nothing is being injected) that it is not really painful. Massaging the same trigger point is usually much more painful!

If the needle is left 'in-situ' there is very little feeling at all.

For 'deep stimulation' once the needle hits 'the spot' many

people get a dull, heavy sensation in the trigger point's referral zone. But again, it is usually much less painful than rubbing the same trigger point out!

Is it acupuncture?

No. Acupuncture is based on ancient philosophies and uses special points that have been mapped out over thousands of years. These acupoints are along lines of energy flow called 'meridians'.

Dry needling is directly into the spot that is causing pain and can be felt quite easily. It may be effective for many of the same reasons acupuncture is but is not based on the same philosophy. Dry needling is for musculoskeletal problems (such as tight muscles, sore joints).

When can dry needling be used?

Dry needling is useful for Musculoskeletal conditions :

- Wry neck
- Sports injuries
- Work injuries
- Headaches
- Some jaw problems
- Neck and postural pain
- Back pain
- Chronic tennis and golfer's elbow

Are there any precautions?

Of course – there are a number of protocols qualified practitioners MUST abide by in order to be safe:

- Each needle is sterile, single-use needle that is disposed of in a sharps container
- Sterile swabs are used to prepare the skin before application
- Sterile swabs are used when removing needles

- Conditions that require medical management (fractures, dislocations etc) are referred immediately for such management
- If you have a bleeding disorder (such as haemophilia)
- If you are on drug therapy (anti-clotting, blood pressure, diabetes)
- If you are intoxicated or emotional
- If you suffer rheumatic fever
- If you have an insufficiency of a heart valve or coronary stents

Are there any side effects?

There are usually very few but in a minority of cases people may experience:

- Drowsiness
- Fatigue
- Slight capillary spotting or bleeding
- Post-treatment pain (especially after deep stimulation and this should be explained at the time)