

Trigger Point Injections

Trigger point injections (TPI's) are the most common injections used for the treatment of fibromyalgia and myofascial pain. Trigger points are diagnosed by the application of direct pressure to the muscles. Often times, a knot will be present within the muscle itself. Pressing on this region may cause the referral of pain to an adjacent area. When a few specific areas are causing a majority of your symptoms, these injections should be considered. The most common muscles involved are the trapezius, paraspinals, scapular and gluteal muscles.

Trigger point injections combine a local anesthetic and often a corticosteroid which may prolong the effect of the injection. The insertion of the needle also works mechanically to break up knots. Benefits of the treatment include reducing the pain and spasms, which also confirms that the area injected was indeed the source of pain.

Initially trigger points may respond to a trial of physical therapy involving stretching and the correction of poor mechanics and posture. For those who do not respond to these measures, trigger point injections may be used as an adjunctive treatment. It is important to note that these injections are most effective when part of a directed exercise program.

Your physician will perform an examination to determine if you are suffering from trigger points. Once these areas are localized, injections may be recommended. The actual injection may cause a brief period of increased pain which may be associated with a twitching in the muscle. The anesthetic then works rapidly to dull the pain. The mechanism of action is a desensitization of the hyperactive muscle area and reduction of the localized pain and spasm. After the injections, your physician may give additional recommendations and answer any of your questions.

There is no way to determine how long a particular trigger point injection will last. It can be anywhere from a few hours to a few months. However, the average trigger point injection seems to last 3-4 weeks. While trigger point injections are not a permanent solution, they may reduce moderate to severe muscle pain. As with any injection, proper follow-up is required to monitor your response and determine if repeat treatment is necessary.

If you think this treatment may be of benefit to you, speak to your physician. You may be on the road to decreased pain along with improved mobility and function.



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