



Patient Resources For Dry Needling, Also Known As Intramuscular Stimulation (IMS)

What Is Dry Needling and How Is It Different from Acupuncture?

Dry needling is a modern, evidence-based technique used by trained practitioners, often physiotherapists or chiropractors, to release tight muscles and trigger points.

What Makes It Different from Acupuncture?

- ★ **Purpose:** Acupuncture aims to balance energy (Qi); dry needling targets muscle dysfunction directly.
- ★ **Points:** Acupuncture uses meridian pathways; dry needling focuses on myofascial trigger points and painful knots.
- ★ **Training:** Dry needling is a physical therapy technique, often taught through specialized post-graduate courses.

Both use thin, sterile needles, but they differ in approach and theory. The goal of dry needling is to relieve pain, restore function, and improve mobility.

How Dry Needling Relieves Muscle Tension and Trigger Points

Trigger points are small, sensitive knots within a tight band of muscle. They can cause pain, stiffness, and even refer discomfort to other areas of the body.

How Dry Needling Works:

- The needle is inserted directly into the trigger point.
- This causes a local twitch response, releasing the muscle tension.
- It increases blood flow, reduces inflammation, and helps reset nerve signals.

Patients often feel immediate relief, though mild soreness can follow as the muscle heals.

Dry Needling for Neck, Shoulder, or Back Pain

These are some of the most common areas treated with dry needling.

Conditions It May Help:

- Tension headaches and neck stiffness
- Upper back and shoulder pain (e.g., rotator cuff strain)
- Lower back pain and sciatica
- Postural strain from desk work or repetitive tasks

Dry needling helps release tight muscles, improves mobility, and complements strengthening or stretching exercises.

What to Expect After a Dry Needling Session

Many patients ask what they'll feel after their first treatment.

Common Reactions:

- Mild muscle soreness (like a workout) lasting 24–48 hours
- Occasional bruising or light fatigue
- Some feel immediate relief; others see improvement after a few sessions

What Helps:

- Drink water to support recovery
- Gentle stretching and movement
- Apply heat or use light exercise to keep tissues mobile

Your provider will guide you through aftercare based on your body's response.

Dry Needling for Athletic Recovery and Performance

Athletes benefit greatly from dry needling, whether during injury rehab or for regular maintenance.

Why It's Useful:

- Releases tight muscles after intense training
- Improves flexibility and joint range of motion
- Aids in faster recovery by improving blood flow and reducing micro-inflammation
- Prevents injury by addressing tension before it becomes a problem

It's especially popular among runners, weightlifters, and those in high-impact sports.

Is Dry Needling Safe? Contraindications and Precautions

Dry needling is considered safe when performed by a trained professional, but it's not for everyone.

Not Recommended For:

- ⌚ People with needle phobia or uncontrolled bleeding disorders
- ⌚ During pregnancy
- ⌚ Those with local infections or compromised immune systems

Always tell your therapist about your health history so they can tailor care to your needs.

The Science Behind Dry Needling: How It Works

Dry needling is backed by growing research and clinical evidence.

Physiological Effects:

- ⌚ **Neuromuscular reset:** Activates the spinal cord reflex to relax tight muscles
- ⌚ **Increases circulation:** Promotes healing through better oxygen delivery
- ⌚ **Reduces pain signals:** Modifies local nerve activity to decrease sensitivity
- ⌚ **Stimulates tissue repair:** Encourages collagen and tissue regeneration in chronic injuries

It's especially useful for persistent pain and stiffness that hasn't responded to other therapies.

Dry Needling vs. Other Manual Therapy Techniques

Manual therapy includes many tools, massage, joint mobilization, myofascial release, and more. How does dry needling compare?

Key Differences:

- 🕒 **Precision:** Dry needling targets the deep layers of muscle that hands can't reach.
- 🕒 **Speed:** Results can sometimes be felt within a single session.
- 🕒 **Combination:** It works well alongside massage or physiotherapy for comprehensive care.

While manual therapy treats tissue from the outside, dry needling gets to the root of muscle dysfunction internally.

Can You Combine Dry Needling with Physiotherapy or Massage?

Yes! In fact, combining therapies can speed up healing and improve outcomes.

Why It Works Well Together:

- 🕒 Dry needling relieves knots and restrictions.
- 🕒 Physiotherapy builds strength and corrects imbalances.
- 🕒 Massage increases circulation and supports relaxation.

Your care provider may create an integrated plan based on your goals, condition, and comfort level.

Dry Needling for TMJ and Jaw Pain

Jaw pain and tension headaches are often linked to overactive muscles in the face and neck.

Dry Needling Can Help By:

- Releasing trigger points in the masseter, temporalis, and upper neck muscles
- Reducing jaw clenching and nighttime grinding
- Improving alignment and relieving pressure around the TMJ joint

When paired with jaw exercises or postural correction, it can significantly reduce symptoms and improve function.



Contact Us

Address: 102C, 8805 Resources Road,
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A6

Phone: 780-539-1261

Email: info@hillstar.ca