




# **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.

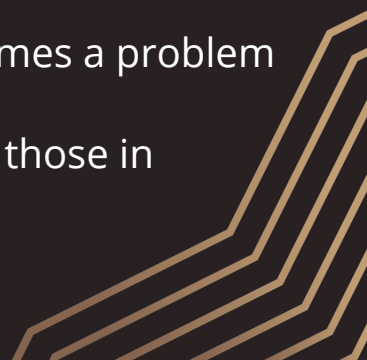
# Dry Needling for Athletic Recovery and Performance

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](mailto:info@hillstar.ca)