

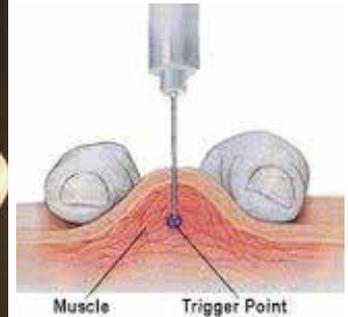
## Trigger Point Injections

### For Pain Caused by Taut Muscles and Certain Tension Headaches

A trigger point injection is an outpatient procedure for treating myofascial pain in the neck, back, and shoulders caused by tight bands in the skeletal muscles. This information page will explain what it is then your provider will explain if it is for you.

#### *What is a trigger point?*

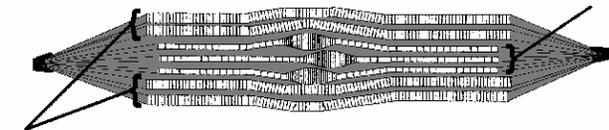
A trigger point is a small area within a muscle that is very sensitive to touch or pressure. It can be very painful. Injury, overexertion, muscle tension, stress, and muscle spasms are all common causes of trigger points. They most frequently occur in the neck, back, and shoulders. When you use your muscles they contract then relax. A trigger point develops when a small area of muscle within the larger muscle body fails to adequately relax. This creates a taut band within the muscle body that doesn't function correctly and becomes inflamed.



#### *What happens during an injection?*

You will be asked to lie face down on an exam table or sit leaning over a bedside table depending on the location of your trigger point. Your provider will feel your taut bands and mark them with a skin marker. The areas will then be aseptically cleaned. An ultrasound may be used to visualize the bands. Your skin will be numbed then a small needle is placed within the trigger point. This may initially cause discomfort that allows your provider to know they are in the right spot. Local anesthetic with or without a steroid is then injected into the trigger point. The needle is withdrawn and a band aid is applied.

**TAUT BAND OF MUSCLE FIBERS WITH TRIGGER POINT**



**NORMAL MUSCLE FIBERS**

#### *How do I know if I have a trigger point?*

A trigger point can cause extreme pain. Normally you will feel it in the large muscles of your neck, shoulders, and upper back. You may notice a knot within the muscle. Often you will have more than one. It may feel tender, hard, or twitch when you touch it. In some cases, a trigger point can irritate surrounding nerves causing pain to spread to nearby areas (referred pain). Your pain may limit your ability to move comfortably.

#### *What is a trigger point injection?*

The placement of local anesthetic with or without a steroid directly into the trigger point relaxes the taut band and allows the muscle body to return to normal function without pain. While other treatments are available, injection has been shown to be the most effective and offers the quickest relief.

#### *What happens after an injection?*

When you are ready to leave the staff will give you discharge instructions. Take it easy the rest of the day. You may feel immediate relief from the local anesthetic for a period of time. This may indicate the medication has reached the right spot and we have identified the right pain generator. The next day do regular stretches and move your shoulders and neck through their normal range of motion. Apply heat or ice to the injection sites as needed and take over the counter pain medicine as needed per instructions. Avoid strenuous activity for 3-4 days to avoid relapse.

#### *How long can I expect pain relief?*

The procedure generally produces good pain relief and resolution of the trigger point. However, certain people are at greater risk for regeneration of trigger points in the future. Factors that may lead to more trigger points in the future include muscle injury, stress, anxiety, spasms, and having a myofascial pain syndrome.