

TRIGGER POINT INJECTIONS OVERVIEW

Clinical Significance of Trigger Point Injections

Musculoskeletal pain is a common complaint that many primary care and pain providers diagnose and treat. Treating pain using a **multimodal approach** is essential in providing effective care for patients.

A **Trigger Point Injection (TPI)** is a pain management treatment that can be used as a primary or adjunctive therapy to relieve myofascial pain. Trigger points are “*knots*” in the muscles that can **cause pain, tightness, and tenderness**. To the touch, these trigger points may feel like **small bumps** under the skin, which often form from acute trauma or repetitive micro-trauma. These traumas lead to stress on the muscle fibers resulting in a constant contracted state.

TPIs can be performed two (2) different ways:

1. Using a local anesthetic with or without corticosteroid
2. Through a dry needling technique without an injectable substance

With TPIs, providers can **address people’s pain generator and improve their range of motion and functionality** without the need of pharmacological therapies. Most often pain is relieved within seventy-two (72) hours of the procedure.

When & Who to Recommend TPIs

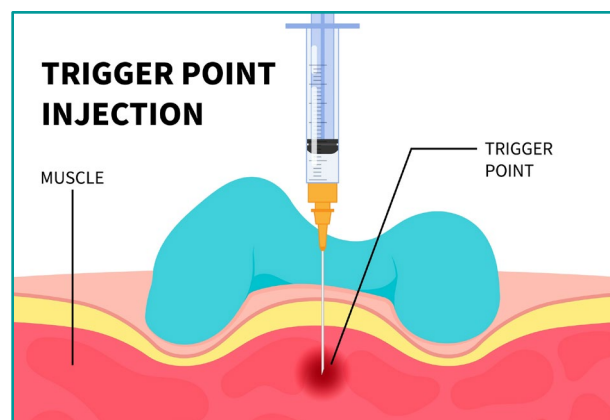
Trigger points can form in any muscle, and people can develop one or several trigger points throughout their musculoskeletal system. Certain muscles are more susceptible, so TPIs are most often performed on patients experiencing myofascial pain in the following areas:

- Neck
- Shoulders
- Lower Back
- Legs

In some cases, a trigger point can cause referred pain, which is pain felt away from the originating site.

TPIs are generally safe and can provide significant pain relief to those experiencing myofascial pain associated with trigger points. TPIs may also be a beneficial treatment option for those who have failed to see improvement from other treatments, such as heat therapy, massage therapy, myofascial release, and/or physical therapy.

For those who are unable to participate in physical therapy due to the intensity of their pain, TPIs may be a particularly effective treatment option. TPIs may reduce pain such that individuals can better participate in physical therapy.



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TPI Certification Process

If you are interested in receiving TPI training and learning the skill, confirm with your credentialing department that your command can support privileging. If it does, follow the steps below:



TPI Materials

The following materials are needed to perform TPIs:

- A 27- to 30-gauge 1.5-inch needle or an acupuncture needle if using dry needling technique
- A 3, 5, or 10-mL syringe
- An aesthetic agent, such as lidocaine or bupivacaine (optional)
- A Corticosteroid or NSAID (optional)
- A Topical anesthetic spray (optional)
- Gloves
- A skin cleaning agent, such as alcohol pads

You may request these materials from your command.

References & Resources

See below for additional literature on TPIs and access to references used.

- Check out the [Cleveland Clinic's](#) and [Medstar Health's](#) websites on TPIs for a more detailed overview
- Access an informational [TPI Continuing Education Activity](#) on the National Library of Medicine's website to learn how to diagnose trigger points, identify indications for TPIs, and the techniques to perform TPIs
- Learn what a patient can expect during and after a TPI procedure and about the possible side effects to on the [Veterans Affairs'](#) website

**To view links please right click and select "Copy Link" and paste that link into your browser*



If you are interested becoming credentialed or have any questions regarding TPI training, please contact the POC closest to your command.

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For any general questions or issues contacting a POC above, please contact CAPT Diana Fu at diana.c.fu.mil@health.mil.