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INDIANA PHYSICAL THERAPY

# DRY NEEDLING



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## WHAT IS DRY NEEDLING?

**Dry Needling** is a technique physical therapists use (where allowed by state law) to treat myofascial pain. The technique uses a “dry” needle, one without medication or injection, inserted through the skin into areas of the muscle, known as trigger points.

Dry Needling is not acupuncture, a practice based on traditional Chinese medicine and performed by acupuncturists.

Dry Needling is a part of modern Western medicine principles, and supported by research.

## IS DRY NEEDLING SAFE?

Minor bruising or bleeding can occur with dry needling and is considered normal. Temporary pain at the dry needling site is not uncommon. Pneumothorax is the most serious side effect and is very rare occurring in less than 0.01% of cases.

If you experience any shortness of breath with exertion, increased breathing rate, chest pain, a dry cough, bluish discoloration of the skin, you should contact your physical therapists or physician.

## WHAT IS A TRIGGER POINT?

A trigger point is a taut band of skeletal muscle located within a larger muscle group. Trigger points can be tender to the touch, and touching a trigger point may cause pain to other parts of the body.

## WHY DRY NEEDLING?

In cases when dry needling is used by a physical therapist, it is typically one technique that’s part of a larger treatment plan.

Physical therapists use dry needling with the goal of releasing or inactivating trigger points to relieve pain or improve range of motion. Preliminary research supports that dry needling improves pain control, reduces muscle tension, and normalizes dysfunctions of the motor end plates, the sites at which nerve impulses are transmitted to muscles. This can help speed up the patients return to active rehabilitation.

As part of their entry level education, physical therapists are well educated in anatomy and therapeutic treatment of the body. Physical therapists who perform dry needling supplement that knowledge by obtaining specific postgraduate education and training. When contacting a physical therapist for dry needling treatment, be sure to ask about their specific experience and education

## WHAT KIND OF NEEDLES ARE USED?

Dry Needling involves a thin filiform needle that penetrates the skin and stimulates underlying myofascial trigger points and muscular and connective tissues. The needle allows a physical therapist to target tissues that are not manually palpable.