

What is Dry Needling?

Dry needling is an evidence-based form of therapy that targets neuromusculoskeletal conditions such as myofascial trigger points, tendons, ligaments, and near nerves via sterile, single-use, fine needles. It can stimulate blood flow and circulation to help promote healing in areas of pain and dysfunction.

What is the Difference Between Dry Needling and Acupuncture?

Dry needling differs from traditional practices of acupuncture or oriental medicine where the focus is on altering energy flow along Chinese Meridians to treat diseases. Dry needling targets specific areas of dysfunction directly through localized and tissue-targeted techniques versus distal points like acupuncture focuses on.

Is Dry Needling Safe, and Is There Anything I Should Know about Side Effects?

Dry needling is considered very safe. Some minor effects, such as drowsiness, euphoria, and tiredness, may be noted (1-3% of patients). Occasionally and infrequently, temporary discomfort, soreness, or pain at the site of needling can occur, which can also be considered a good thing and an area needing treatment. Mild bruising, swelling, or bleeding can be experienced during or after treatment (15-20%). Fainting is also very rare but can occur (0.3%). The most serious side effect includes a pneumothorax (lung collapse); however, it is very rare, and major side effects occur in less than 0.01% of treatments. If you experience signs or symptoms up to several hours later, please get in touch with your physician and physical therapist immediately. Symptoms typically include chest pain, dry cough, shortness of breath with exertion, increased breathing rate, bluish skin discoloration, and excessive sweating. Other considerations, precautions, and contraindications will be reviewed thoroughly by your provider to ensure you are a candidate for dry needling.

Research Articles and References

Cervicogenic Headaches: <https://spinalmanipulation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/piis1529943020311451-2.pdf>

TMJ/Jaw Pain: <https://spinalmanipulation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/dry-needling-and-upper-cervical-spinal-manipulation-in-patients-with-tmd-dunning-et-al-2022.pdf>

Neck Pain: <https://spinalmanipulation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/dry-needling-for-neck-pain-case-report-pavkovich-2015.pdf>

Lateral Hip/Thigh Pain: <https://spinalmanipulation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/effectiveness-of-dry-needling-for-chronic-hip-thigh-pain-case-series-pavkovich-2015.pdf>

Dry Needling and Pregnancy: <https://spinalmanipulation.org/2016/08/08/dry-needling-during-pregnancy-the-risks-and-benefits/>