



Momentum Health

WHAT IS DRY NEEDLING?

Dry needling is a treatment technique used by physiotherapists, where a thin sterile acupuncture needle is inserted in trigger points, or taut bands of muscle in order to create a reset of tension within the targeted muscle. When a needle is inserted into a trigger point, it elicits a response that releases that triggerpoint and helps restore normal function. This method of treatment aims to release muscular tension, reduce local and referred pain, improve range of motion and create a neuromuscular reset.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING DRY NEEDLING?

During dry needling, the practitioner inserts a filiform needle into the skin. Filiform needles are fine, short, stainless steel needles that don't inject fluid into the body. That's why the term "dry" in dry needling is used.

Practitioners insert the needle directly into trigger points in the muscle or tissue. These points are areas of knotted or tight muscle. The needles remain in the skin for a short period of time (5-10 seconds). Not all healthcare professionals are registered to perform dry needling as it is an additional certification. We will consult with you regarding the benefits and appropriateness of using this treatment technique.

Patients will often feel a small pinch as the sterile needle passes through the skin and as the needle reaches deep within the muscle, a sensation of ache and sometimes twitch can indicate immediate effectiveness. For dry needling to be effective, a twitch response may not always be present and can still elicit the desired muscular release.

POSSIBLE SIDE-EFFECTS AND AFTERCARE

After the treatment has been applied, a temporary sensation of soreness can be expected due to the reset of the muscle that took place; this should not exceed 24 hours, nor should it cause the initial pain intensity to increase. Patients are advised to apply heat and encourage light activity of the targeted muscles and joints post-needling, which have shown to help limit the amount of local soreness felt after this treatment.


Possible side effects for dry needling include bruising, infection, metal allergy and pneumothorax. A certified physiotherapist is trained to apply safeguards such as the Clean Needle Technique, Universal Precautions, and will use their advanced knowledge of human anatomy, in order to decrease the risk for adverse events associated with dry needling.

DRY NEEDLING VS ACUPUNCTURE

Both dry needling and acupuncture involve the insertion of thin needles into certain parts of the body, but the similarities stop there. During an acupuncture session, needles are inserted at specific meridian points of the body to re-balance the internal environment. During acupuncture, the needles are usually left in place for 10-30 minutes, whereas with dry needling, only one needle is applied at a time and typically takes 5-10 seconds. Dry needling is more localised and specific to certain muscle groups with the desired effects being similarly localised, as they focus more on restoring mechanical function rather than pain relief.

HOW DOES BILLING WORK?

How your appointment is billed changes based on who provides the treatment. If dry needling is provided by a physiotherapist, your insurance will be billed under physiotherapy coverage. If an acupuncturist provides treatment, then they can bill you as an acupuncturist. Most of our practitioners are dry needling trained under their existing qualifications (Physiotherapy or Chiropractic), but occasionally you will have a practitioner who is also trained as an acupuncturist and can access those additional benefits.



HOW MANY TREATMENTS DO I NEED?

The number of treatments will depend on the condition being treated, its severity, stage of healing, as well as responsiveness to treatment. Patients are advised that under certain conditions, multiple treatments may be needed to achieve the desired outcome. Research has shown that dry needling benefits tend to be maintained for longer periods of time when combined with the practice of targeted exercises prescribed by a physiotherapist or kinesiologist.

REFERENCES:

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