

TRIGGER-POINT INJECTIONS

INTRODUCTION: Trigger-point injections (TPI) are used to treat painful knots of muscle (trigger points) that form when muscles do not relax. Often felt under the skin, the knots may cause localized pain and may irritate the nerves around them, causing referred pain elsewhere in the body.

HOW IT WORKS: In TPI, a solution of local anesthetic, saline, and/or cortisone is injected into the trigger point to relax the intense muscle spasm. Blood flow is restored to the area, flushing out irritating metabolites.

INDICATIONS: TPI is used to treat many muscle groups, especially those in the arms, legs, lower back, and neck. It can also be used to treat fibromyalgia and tension headaches and to ease myofascial pain (chronic pain in the tissue surrounding muscle) that does not respond to other treatments.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: TPI is not recommended for applications over open wounds. Also, if a patient is allergic to particular anesthetics, care must be taken to inject an anesthetic that will not cause an allergic reaction.

TREATMENT PROTOCOLS: After cleansing the skin, the treatment solution is injected into the trigger point using a small needle. Several sites may be injected in one visit. Injections usually take just a few minutes and may cause twitching or mild pain lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes. A brief course of several treatments usually results in sustained relief. A dry-needle technique (involving no medications) can be used for patients with medication allergies.

