

## **What to Expect after Dry Needling Treatments**

### ***What is Dry Needling?***

- Dry needling is a form of therapy in which fine needles are inserted into myofascial trigger points (painful knots in muscles), tendons, ligaments, or near nerves in order to stimulate a healing response in painful musculoskeletal conditions. Dry needling is not acupuncture of Oriental Medicine, that is, it does not have the purpose of altering the flow of energy (“chi”) along traditional Chinese meridians for the treatment of diseases. In fact, dry needling is a modern, science-based intervention for the treatment of pain and dysfunction in musculoskeletal conditions such as neck pain, shoulder impingement, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, headaches, knee pain, shin splints, plantar fasciitis, or low-back pain.

### ***How does Dry Needling help?***

- After, you may have less pain and/or better range of motion. You may also be able to do activities you couldn't do before.

### ***What are the Risks of Dry Needling and is it safe?***

- Drowsiness, tiredness or dizziness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients (1-3%) and if affected, you're advised not to drive. Minor bleeding or bruising occurs after dry needling in 15-20% of treatments and is considered normal. Temporary pain during dry needling occurs in 60-70% of treatments. Existing symptoms can get worse after treatment (less than 3% of patients); however this is not necessarily a “bad” sign. Fainting can occur in certain patients (0.3%), particularly at the first treatment session when needling the head or neck regions. Dry needling is very safe; however serious side effects can occur in 0.01% of people. The most common serious side effect from dry needling is pneumothorax (lung collapse due to air inside the chest wall). The symptoms of dry needling induced pneumothorax commonly do not occur until after the treatment session, sometimes taking several hours to develop. The signs and symptoms of a pneumothorax may include shortness of breath on exertion, an increase in breathing rate, chest pain, a dry cough, bluish discoloration of the skin, or excessive sweating. If such signs and/or symptoms occur, you should immediately contact your physical therapist or physician. Nerves or blood vessels may be damaged from dry needling which can result in pain, numbness or tingling; however, this is a very rare event and is usually temporary. Damage to internal organs has been reported in the medical literature following needling; however, these are extremely rare events (1 in 200,000).

### ***What can be done instead of Dry Needling?***

- You can choose not to do any treatment at this time and see if the condition gets better on its own. Other choices are: soft tissue mobilization alone, joint manipulation, and/or specific exercise

### ***How will I feel after Dry Needling?***

- You may be sore right after treatment where Dry Needling was used. This does not always happen, but it is normal. Soreness may begin in a few hours or even the next day. The soreness may be different for each person. It usually feels like you had a hard workout at the gym. Soreness usually lasts 24-48 hours. Tell your provider at your next visit how long the soreness lasted.
- Bruising from Dry Needling is possible. Some areas are more likely to bruise than others. The shoulders, chest, face and portions of the arms and legs are more likely to bruise than other areas. Large bruising is not common, but can happen. Use ice to help decrease the bruising. If you are worried, please call your provider.
- It is common to feel tired/fatigued, energized, emotional, giggly or “out of it” after treatment. This is a normal and can last up to an hour or two after treatment. If this lasts more than a day contact your provider as a precaution.

Rarely, Dry Needling may actually make your symptoms worse. If this continues past the 24-48 hours, keep note of it. This can help your therapist change your treatment plan if needed. This does not mean Dry Needling cannot help your condition

### ***What should I do after my treatment?***

We highly recommend drinking more water for the next 24 hours after Dry Needling. This helps avoid or reduce soreness. After dry needling treatment, try the following if you want. Please note that if it hurts or makes your symptoms worse, stop the activity.

- Work out and/or stretch.
- Continue normal physical activity.
- Lightly massage the area.
- Use ice for soreness.
- If you have prescription medications, continue to take them as prescribed.

### ***What should I avoid after treatment?***

- Avoid exercise or strenuous activity to the muscles that have been dry needled
- Avoid any new physical activities or sports
- Avoid doing more than you would normally do

**If you are feeling light headed, or have trouble breathing, chest pain, or any other symptoms that concern you after treatment, call your doctor right away. If you have questions or concerns call your physical therapist at (828)293-5174**