

What Is Dry Needling?



Dry needling is the western medicine practice of inserting acupuncture needles into muscles and other tissues to alleviate pain and stimulate healing. Originally, anesthetic solution was injected into muscular “knots”, or trigger points. However, as syringe needling without injection of solution was observed to be just as effective, the term “dry needling” evolved. Now the dry needle of choice is a fine, more comfortable acupuncture needle as opposed to a syringe needle. Although similar, dry needling is *not* the practice of acupuncture, a part of Chinese Medicine which aims to change the body’s “yin and yang chi energy” via specific pathways.

The physiologic responses to needle insertion have been scientifically studied; for example, the knot-like, taught and tender fibers in a muscle have a unique acidic chemistry and a constant tension caused by persistent firing of irritated nerves. The dry needle triggers a nerve fiber in the knot, causing a twitch reaction, and the muscle spills the acidic chemistry and resets its tone. During dry needling, the doctor and patient often feel the knot “melt away.”

Dry needling also stimulates the cells that reside in tendons and ligaments, causing them to change shape, multiply and produce collagen to regenerate damaged tissue. In addition, the needle causes “micro-damage,” eliciting a burst of biologic activity and a natural healing response. Tendon-related problems such as tennis elbow, shoulder rotator cuff tendinitis and knee joint pain all benefit, achieving long-term improvements, versus the typical short-term relief from cortisone injection, which weakens tendons and can further degrade an arthritic joint. The practice of dry needling along nerve pathways, called “neuropuncture,” is emerging as an alternative to acupuncture. Dry needling is drug-free, safe and engages the body’s natural healing mechanisms.

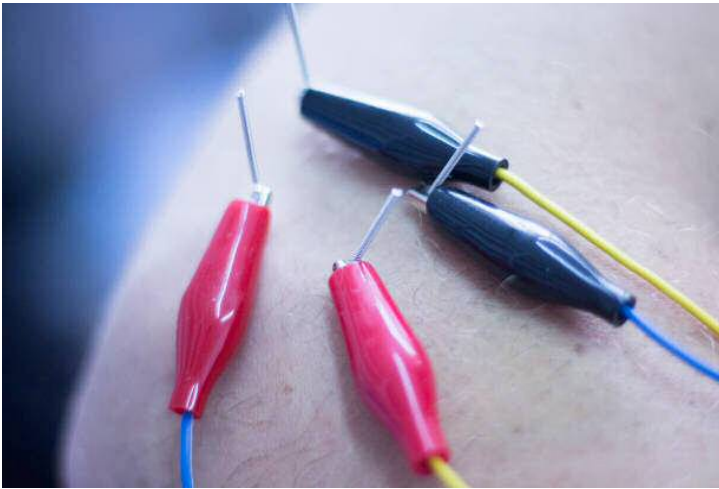


Dry needling releases myofascial trigger points, biostimulates nerves, tendons and ligaments, and promotes tissue regeneration. It is a natural, safe and effective therapy for a wide range of painful conditions, and is often a therapeutic game-changer for getting good results when treating a variety of conditions.

FAQs

Will it hurt?

Dry needling is not typically a painful procedure. Sometimes it can feel sharp when the needle is first inserted or if it contacts a nerve or other sensitive structure; if needle insertion causes any intolerable pain, it is immediately removed. People often describe the dry needling sensation as “weird,” “achy” or “energizing.” At other times the needles are barely perceived.



What are the risks?

Conditions rarely worsen with dry needling. People who are needle-phobic may react with discomfort or a faint feeling, just as they might during a blood draw. *Extremely* rare is atelectasis, or collapsed lung, with nearly zero risk when dry needling is performed by a trained professional.

What are common side effects?

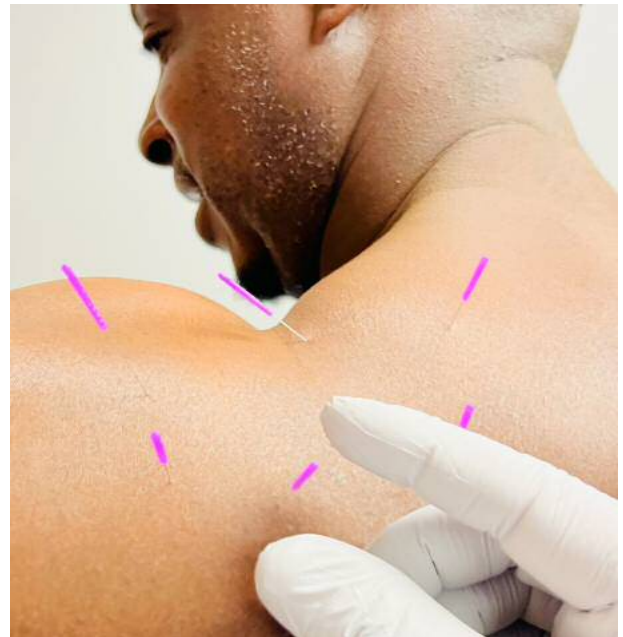
A little soreness after a dry needling session is common, often fading in hours or a day. Sometimes a benign, small bruise or a slight swelling can occur at the needle site.

How long will it take?

Needling muscle “knots” takes a few seconds. Sometimes needles are left in the muscles for a minute or more while other needles are inserted and removed. In some cases, needles are left in place as the patient rests for several minutes (similar to a traditional acupuncture session). Electricity may also be applied to needles, providing a comfortable pulsing stimulation to enhance their effect.

How many treatment sessions will I need?

Some conditions like muscle “knots” can be resolved in a few sessions. Stubborn conditions such as chronic back pain, achilles tendinitis, shoulder rotator cuff tendon tears, tennis elbow syndrome, plantar fasciitis, post-surgical scar formation and arthritic joint pain may require 2x/week treatment for several weeks.



To learn more about dry needling, email: scott@drgillman.com

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