

# Trigger Point Workbook

## **WHIPLASH**

Pain Relief and Rehabilitation

## About the authors



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Simeon is the author of the best selling “Concise Book of Trigger Points” and numerous other publications which have been translated into 18 languages. Simeon was named one of London’s top ten osteopaths by the London Evening Standard, and has won a number of CAM awards for his work in promoting self-help to consumers.



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## **About Us**

Niel Asher Healthcare was founded in 1997 and is now the leading online publisher of educational material and other learning resources for manual therapy.

We provide e-learning tools and services to medical and para-medical practitioners, and information, advice and self-help solutions to patients, using digital media.

We deliver continuous enhancements providing the most relevant solutions for our customers. This commitment to excellence keeps us at the forefront of this industry.

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### **What is Whiplash Injury?**

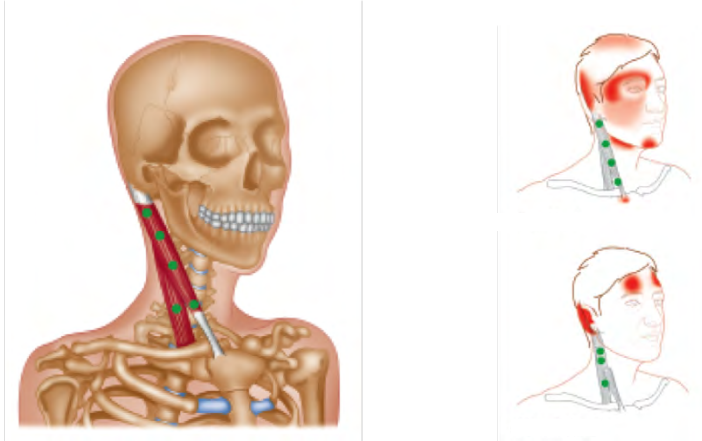
Whiplash is a neck injury that is caused by an impact or blow that forces your head to move abruptly. The sudden force that causes the neck muscles to stretch, may tear the muscles and tendons in your neck, leading to a neck strain.

Whiplash most often occurs in car accidents, specifically in a rear-end collision. However, whiplash can also result from sports accidents, physical abuse, or other trauma.

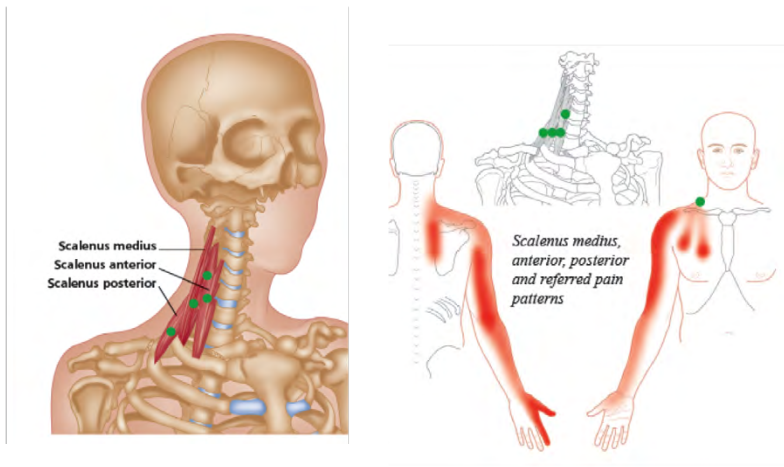
## Which Muscles May be Affected by Whiplash Injury?

(The image on the right details the trigger point and pain map)

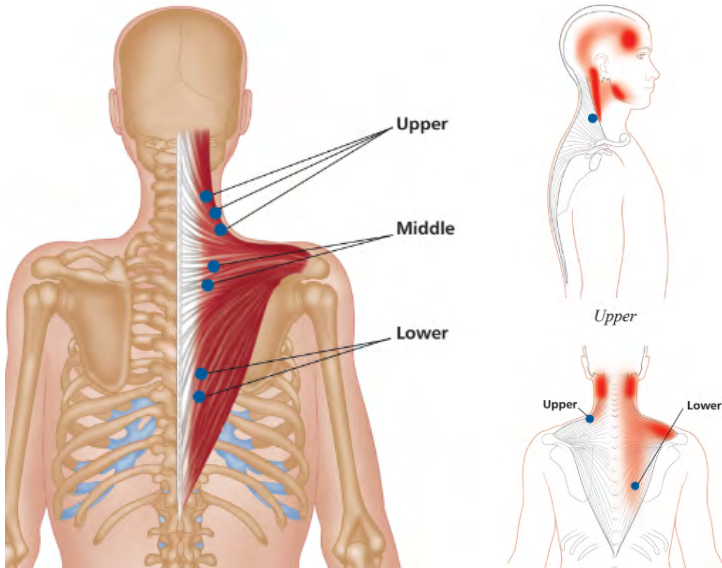
### STERNOCLEIDOMASTOID



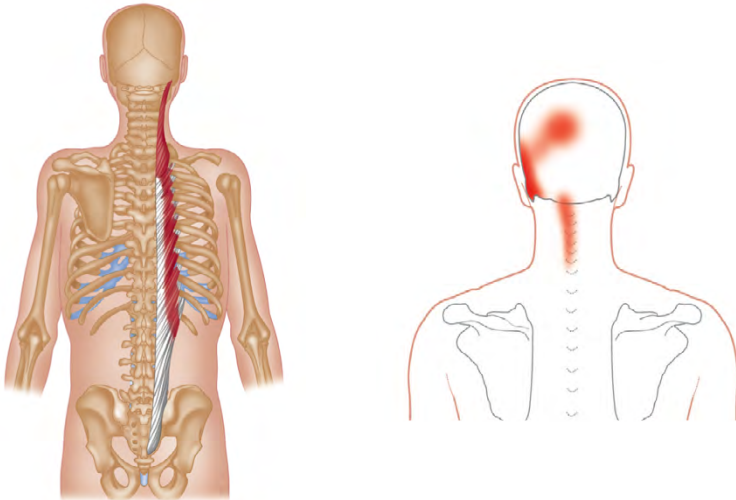
### SCALENES



## UPPER TRAPEZIUS

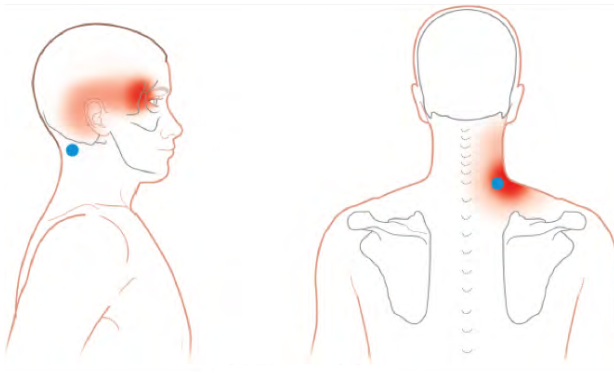
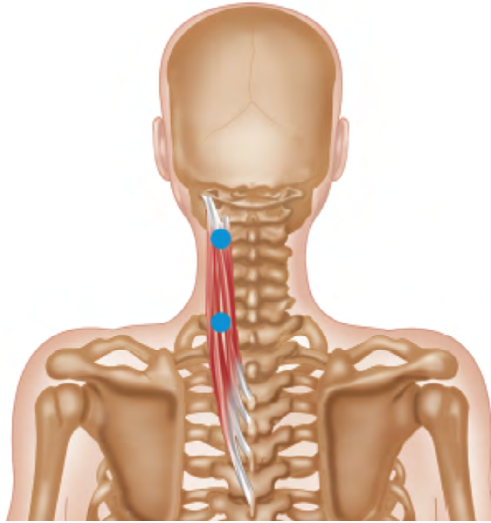


## LONGISSIMUS CAPITI



## SPLENEUS CERVICIS

(The lower images detail the trigger point and pain map)





## Your Trigger Point Treatment Program for Whiplash Injury

This program has been written specifically for sufferers of Whiplash Injury.

In this section we will introduce 3 techniques to help alleviate the pain from Whiplash Injury. They are:

- **Trigger Point Therapy (TPT)**
- **Stretching**
- **Exercise**

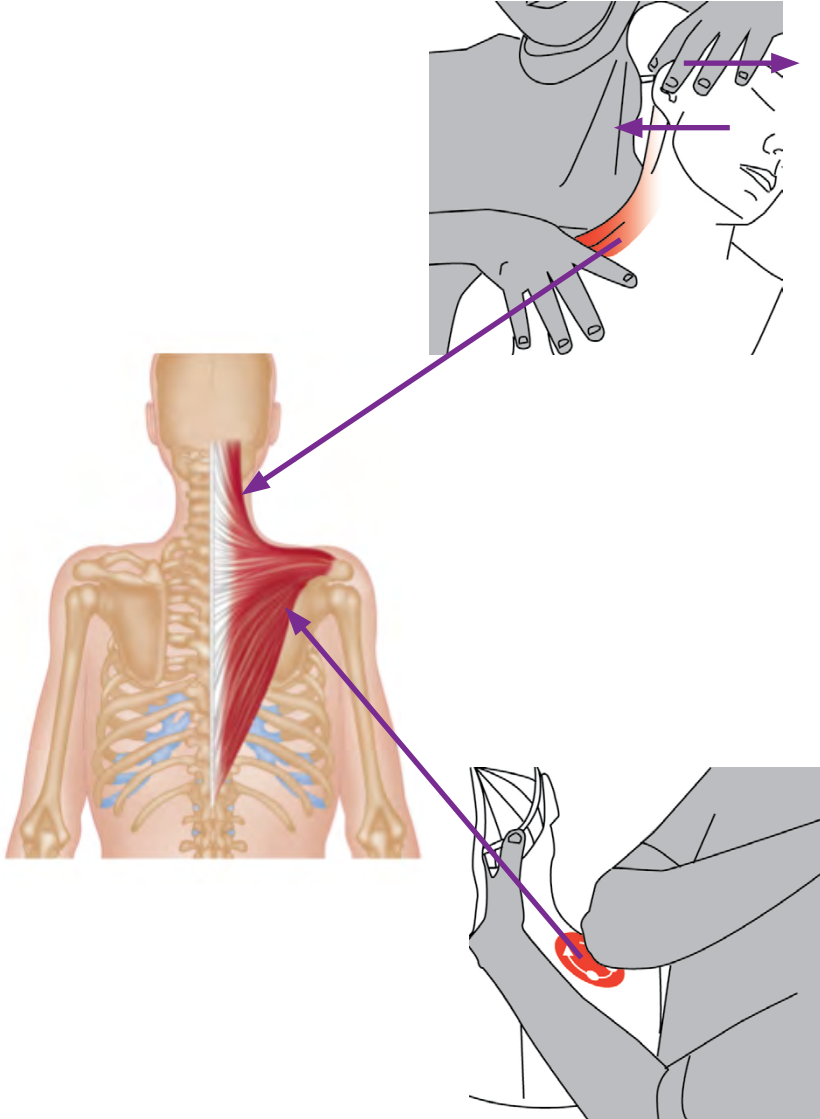
For each, we have provided clear and simple instructions on how to perform the technique and how often. There are also associated images to help you.

We would recommend starting with the Trigger Point Therapy followed by gentle stretching and ending with some exercises.

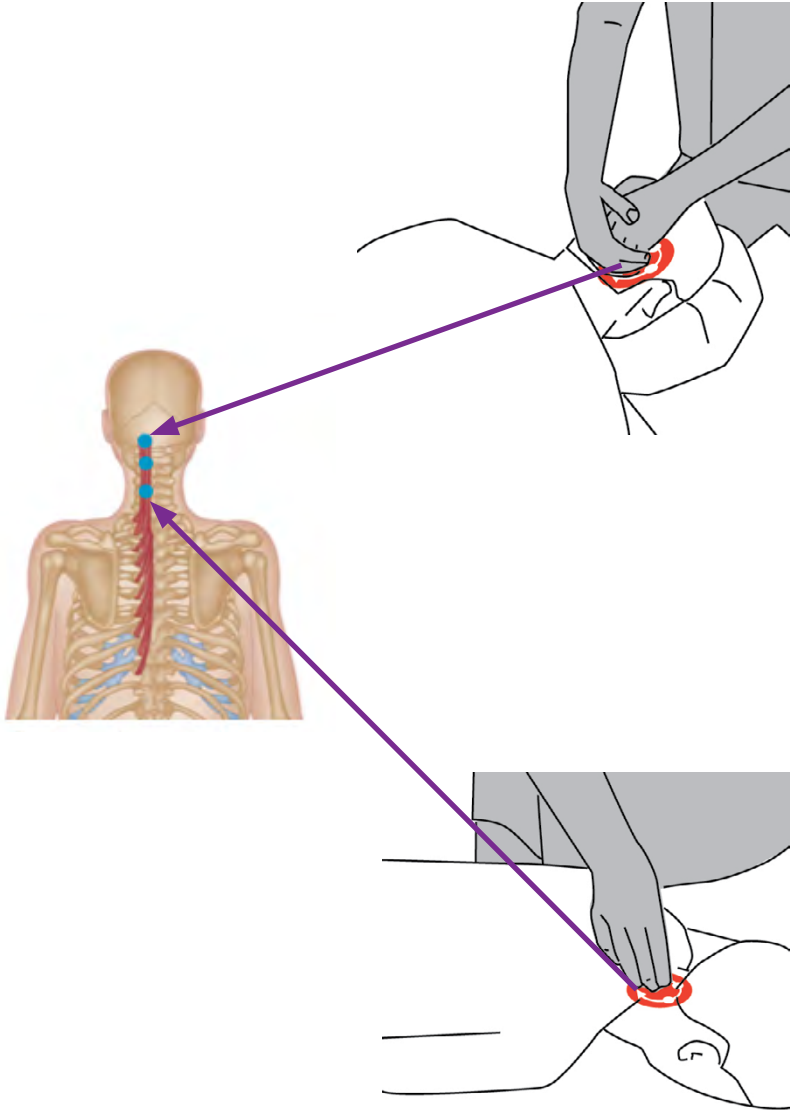
If at any time you experience an adverse reaction to any of these techniques or your pain is greatly increased as a result, stop immediately and seek medical advice where necessary.

<b>TECHNIQUE</b>	<b>REPETITIONS</b>	<b>HOW OFTEN?</b>	<b>FOR HOW MANY WEEKS?</b>
<b>TRIGGER POINT THERAPY</b>	As per instructions	3-4 times per day	6
<b>STRETCHING</b>	3 times	2-3 times daily	6
<b>EXERCISES</b>	30 times	2-3 times daily	6

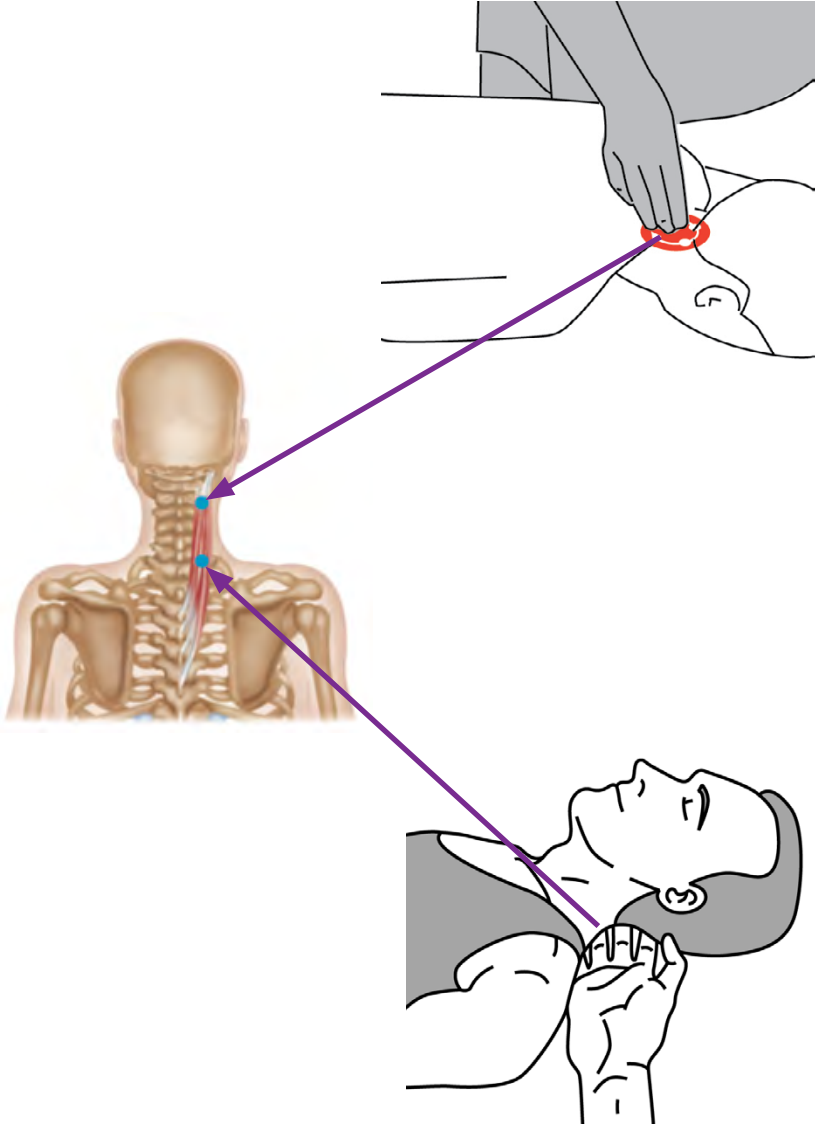
## Upper Trapezius - Treatment



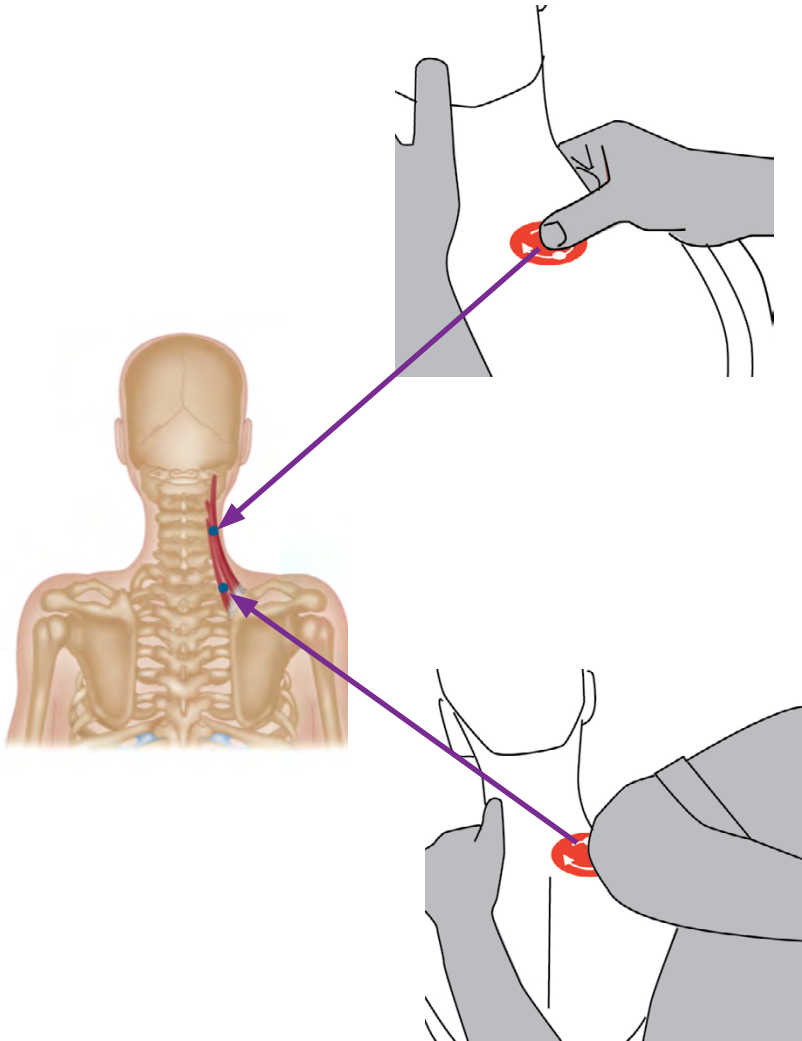
## Semispinalis Capitis and Cervicis - Treatment



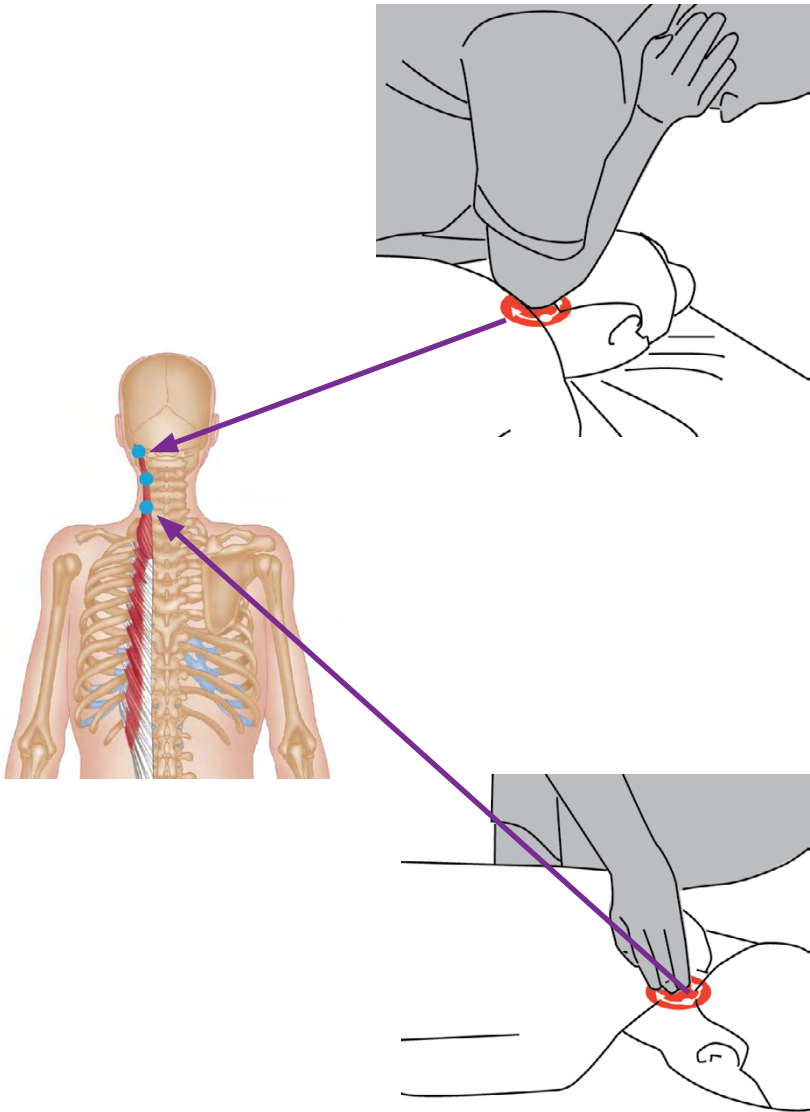
# Splenius Cervicis - Treatment



## Levator Scapulae



## Longissimus Capitis - Treatment



## **TRIGGER POINT THERAPY**

The treatment protocol provided here is based on a technique called Trigger Point Therapy (TPT).

TPT includes a range of hands-on pressure-point techniques, two of which are explained here:

- ‘Deep Stroking Massage’ (DSM) where the sore/trigger point is gently massaged rhythmically to and fro to stimulate inner repair and,
- Inhibition Compression Technique (ICT) which uses sustained pressure on the sore/trigger point until it releases.

Both DSM and ICT are very safe and effective but can leave some soreness for a few minutes to hours afterwards. Very occasionally they may leave bruising if performed overzealously or if you are on certain medication (especially blood thinners).

### **How do I know it is a trigger point?**

You are looking for:

- Stiffness in the affected muscle
- Spot tenderness (exquisite pain)
- A palpable taut/tight nodule or band
- Presence of referred pain (as indicated on the trigger point maps showing you where you should feel pain when pressed)
- Reproduction of your symptoms (accurate)
- The affected area may be moister or warmer (or colder) than the surrounding tissues, and may feel a little like sandpaper

Take a look at the images below and follow these instructions for maximum effect.

### **Technique - Inhibition Compression Technique (ICT)**

1. Identify the tender/trigger point you wish to work on.
2. Place the host muscle in a comfortable position, where it is relaxed and can undergo full stretch.
3. Apply gentle, gradually increasing pressure to the tender point until you feel resistance. This should be experienced as discomfort and not as pain. You should feel some radiation of the pain.
4. Apply sustained pressure until you feel the tender point yield and soften. This can take from a few seconds to several minutes.
5. Steps 3-4 can be repeated, gradually increasing the pressure on the tender/trigger point until it has fully yielded.
6. To achieve a better result, you can try to change the direction of pressure during these repetitions.
7. At the end of each self help “treatment”, massage the area with some cream, oil or lotion in the direction of the muscle. You can also apply warmth or a heat rub afterwards.

### **How Often?**

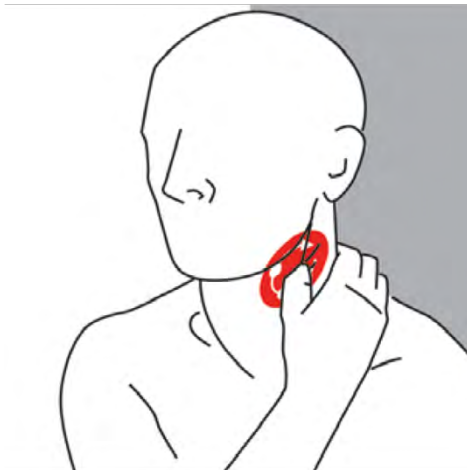
3 to 4 times per day for up to 6 weeks.



## Sternocleidomastoid



Use your fingers or tool as shown

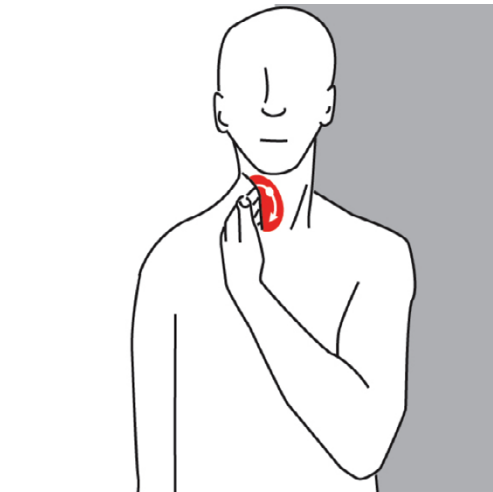


Use your thumb or tool as shown

## Scalenes



Use your fingers or tool as shown



Use your fingers or tool as shown

For the images below, follow these instructions for maximum effect;

### **Technique - Deep Stroking Massage (DSM)**

1. Identify the tender/trigger point you want to work on
2. Lubricate the skin with oil, cream or lotion
3. Work from the top of the muscle toward the outside elbow
4. Perform slow stroking massage using your thumb/elbow/trigger point tool along the length of the muscle. It should feel like squeezing toothpaste from a tube

### **How Often?**

5-10 minutes, once every 2nd day

**SCALENES**



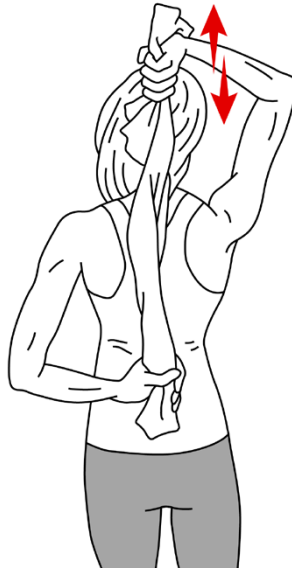
**NECK MUSCLES**



## **STRETCHING**

Stretching is an important part of the rehabilitation process and should begin as soon as pain allows and be continued throughout the rehabilitation program and beyond - good maintenance prevents re-injury. The following program comprises muscle stretching (muscles of the forearm) as well as neural stretches (stretches for the nerves that are involved in this injury).

## Stretch 1: Towel stretch



Stretch using towel as shown

### Technique:

This exercise is important as it helps to keep the scapula supple

- Place a towel behind your back
- Hold it diagonally with one arm at the top behind your shoulder and the other arm grabbing the bottom at your waist
- Flex the elbow down and pull with the bottom arm
- Do not hold the stretch - moving up and down is key, giving it a nice stretch

### How Often?

Repeat 10 times on each side, twice daily

## Stretch 2: Flexor stretch



Move in the direction of the arrows as shown

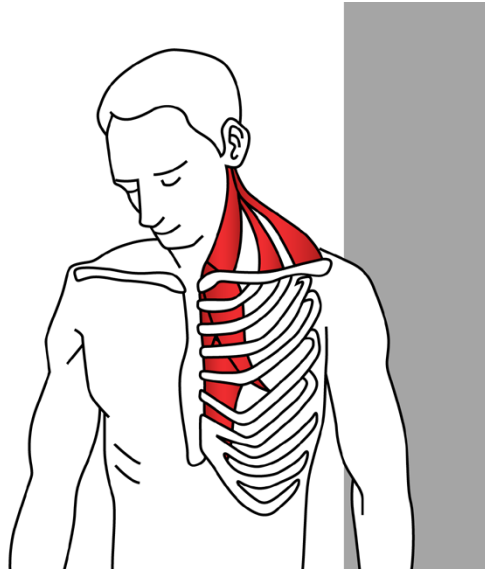
### Technique

- Place your hands on the side of your head
- Elbows facing forward
- Push your elbows backward - towards the wall (or bed if you do this laying down)
- Go as far as you can - get a nice, easy stretch (may get a few tingles... which is OK)
- Return elbows forward again. Do not hold

### How Often?

30 times daily

### Stretch 3: Neck stretch



The red indicates the muscle(s) being stretched

#### Technique

- Assume the correct postural position
- Start with your head centered and gently bring down your right ear towards your right shoulder
- At this point, slightly rotate the neck to the side

A normal stretch of the muscles on the side of the neck may be experienced. However, the exercise should be pain free.

#### How Often?

Hold for 30 to 50 seconds 3 times on each side, twice daily



## Stretch 4: Sternocleidomastoid



The red indicates the muscle(s) being stretched

### Technique

- Position your head in a normal posture
- Face forward with your neck in a neutral position
- Gently drop your head back and look towards the ceiling

### How Often?

Hold for 20 to 50 seconds and repeat 3 times with breaks in between to prevent dizziness, twice daily

## **EXERCISES**

Exercises increase strength in the affected muscle and promote healthy blood flow to the injured area.

It is of utmost importance to avoid losing range of motion in the neck. Therefore, keeping the neck supple and the muscles stretched will prevent the long term “freezing” of the neck and inability to move. Mobilizing as well as strengthening the upper back (thoracic) will help to keep motion below the neck smooth and supple. For this reason, shoulder blade and upper back (thoracic spine) exercises are highly recommended in the recovery of Whiplash Injury.

## Exercise 1: Neck isometric



Adopt position as shown

### Technique

- Assume the correct postural position and gently raise the back of your head
- Place your hand on your right cheek
- Without moving your head, turn your eyes to the right and gently push your head into your hands as if to look over your shoulder

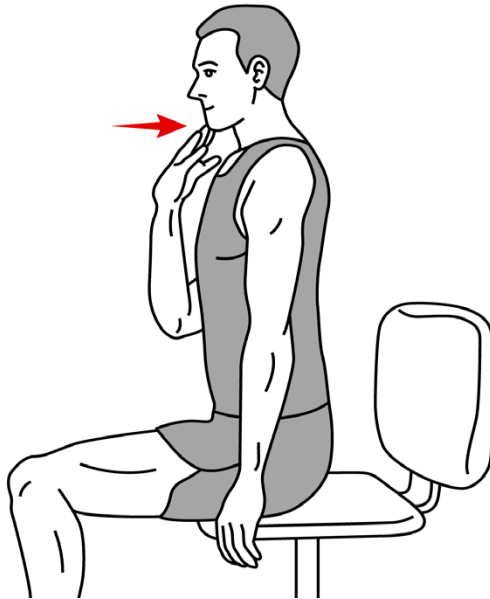
While performing this exercise no actual movement occurs.

Do the exercises smoothly and gently and try using only 10-20% of your maximal effort.

### How Often?

Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times on each side, twice daily

## Exercise 2: Chin tucks



Adopt position as shown

### Technique

- Sit up straight in a chair. Sit to the front, not against the back of the chair. Sitting up will help you to strengthen the muscles you need for good posture
- Think of lifting the crown of your head to the ceiling. Be careful not to tip the head back. Your chin should be parallel to the floor
- Without tipping the head in any direction, pull your chin and head straight back. You will feel a stretch in the back of your neck

### How Often?

8 to 12 repetitions, 3 times, twice daily

### Exercise 3: Spinal mobilization



Adopt position as shown

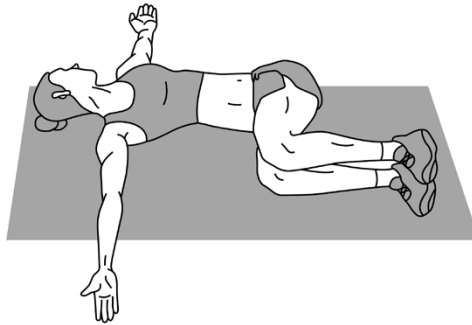
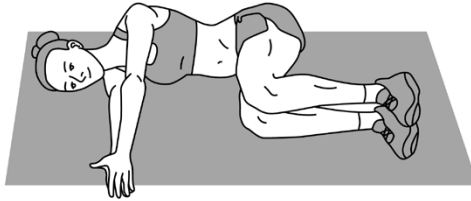
#### Technique

- Lay down on all fours
- Place one hand behind the back while the opposite hand remains on the floor
- Rotate the upper body (side that the arm is behind the back) with the elbow pointing to the sky as far back as possible
- Return to the start position

#### How Often?

Repeat 5 to 10 times on each side, twice daily

## Exercise 4: Torso twists



Adopt positions as shown

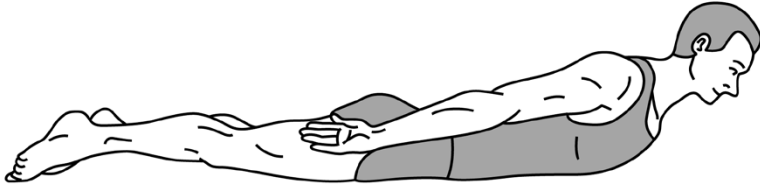
### Technique

- Start by lying on your right side
- Bend your knees and extend your arms in front of you
- Keeping your right shoulder touching the ground, open up your chest toward the ceiling as you bring your other shoulder toward the floor

### How Often?

Hold this position for 20 to 30 seconds and repeat 3 times on each side, twice daily

## Exercise 5: Rhomboid Strengthening (darts)



Adopt position as shown

### Technique

- Begin by lying on your stomach with your arms by your side
- Tighten your rhomboids by squeezing your shoulder blades together
- Slowly lift your arms and chest off the ground, keeping your neck straight
- Hold for 2 seconds at the top of the movement and then slowly return to the starting position

The exercise may be performed with palms facing up or down.

### How Often?

Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions, once a day provided the exercise is pain free

## YOUR PERSONAL 6 WEEK DIARY

Tick each box on completion

WEEK 1	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

WEEK 2	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

WEEK 3	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

WEEK 4	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

WEEK 5	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

WEEK 6	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
TPT							
STRETCH							
EXERCISE							

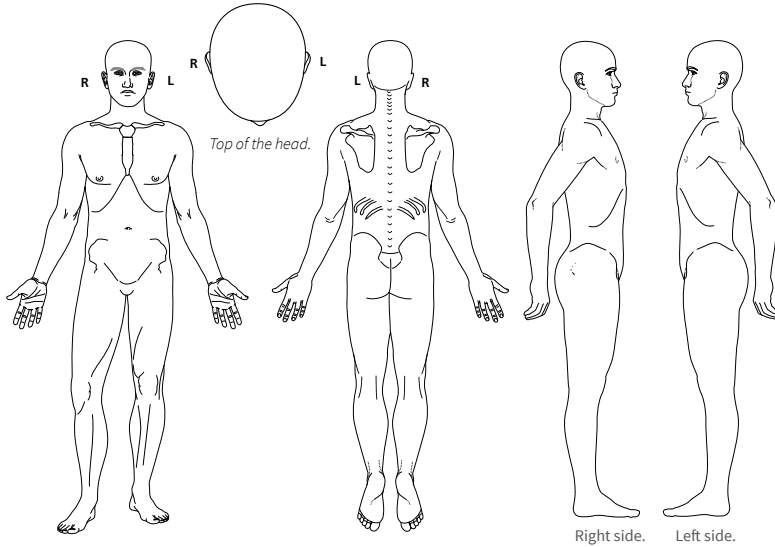


*Trigger Point Therapy - Treatment Assessment*

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Patient: \_\_\_\_\_ Care provider: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*blue = pain; yellow = numbness; orange = tingling; green = cramp; purple = tightness*



Reason for visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Most distressing symptoms: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional patient comments (quality and nature of pain, aggravating factors, what has been tried and results): \_\_\_\_\_

Changes: \_\_\_\_\_

Needs (including prescriptions, therapies or tests): \_\_\_\_\_

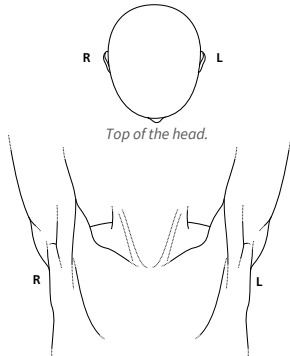
Action items (patient and care provider): \_\_\_\_\_

*Trigger Point Therapy - Treatment Assessment*

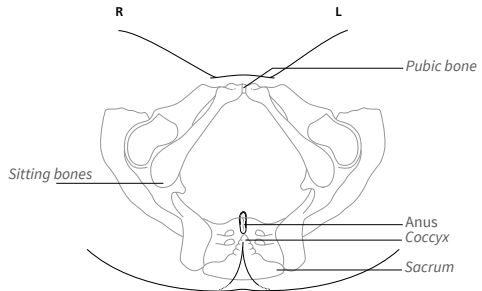
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Patient: \_\_\_\_\_ Care provider: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*blue = pain; yellow = numbness; orange = tingling; green = cramp; purple = tightness*



*Underarm areas.*



*Pelvic area.*

Additional patient input: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Care provider comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Action items patient: \_\_\_\_\_  
Next visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Action items care provider: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Lifestyle Changes to Consider**

- When lifting objects try to test their weight beforehand. Avoid any awkward positions and reaching out when lifting. Also, try to carry the object as close to your body as possible.
- Position yourself correctly when lifting objects from ground level. Try to stand close to the object with your feet shoulder width apart. Bend using your knees and your back, instead of using your back only, and keep your chin in during the lift.
- When working at a bench for jobs such as hammering, chopping food and packing, keep your shoulders relaxed by drawing your shoulder blades back and downwards. Try to avoid working for extended hours at a time and take a break every 10 to 15 minutes for a few seconds.
- When carrying groceries, carry fewer bags at a time. We realise that this may mean more trips; however, this will significantly decrease the strain on your neck.
- Check the content of your bags (handbags, gym bags, etc.) before carrying them. Try to remove any unnecessary objects in order to lighten the load.
- When travelling always use a suitcase and hand luggage with wheels. Evaluate whether all items are necessary, especially the heavier ones such as footwear. Try to lessen the load.
- When travelling to and from work carry your briefcase or laptop with both hands. Avoid overloading the bag and if necessary, carry the items that don't fit in a separate bag in order to avoid placing all the weight on one side of the body.

- When carrying several items or oversized items, try using a cart or trolley. If you are carrying children, regularly change sides and try using slings, backpacks or strollers.

## **Recommended Sports and Activities**

Returning to full activity is very important – and thus it is highly recommended to engage in sports.

Movement is the key – choose sports that are non contact and are not stressful on the neck.

Some examples are: swimming (freestyle/backstroke), yoga (no head stands), pilates, feldenkreis, walking, cycling, aerobics.

## **Sports and Activities - Not Recommended**

Contact sports such as rugby, soccer , football, basketball, volleyball

Any sports involving head stands – particularly in the acute stage

Heavy weight lifting

## **Diet**

Studies have demonstrated that underlying health issues—such as folic acid, iron, vitamin, and/or mineral deficiency—may both contribute to and perpetuate trigger point activity.

It is worth noting that tendons do not repair in the presence of nicotine! Furthermore, recent studies have indicated that the modern lifestyle tends to “under load” muscles and tendons, leading to internal fatty changes and increased vulnerability to damage.

Other factors such as fatty foods and exposure to free radicals may also have a detrimental effect on our soft tissues. Supplements—for example omega-3, zinc, magnesium, iron, and vitamins K, B12, and C, as well as folic acid—may help to speed up your recovery.

### **What Next?**

We would always recommend seeing a doctor or therapist for an initial consultation to get a proper diagnosis if you haven't done so already.

Whiplash symptoms might start within hours of the accident or might take months to manifest. The physical symptoms can range in intensity but, there can be psychological symptoms such as fear or anxiety as well. We would definitely recommend that you get a proper diagnosis from a doctor or therapist for an initial consultation. To diagnose, your doctor or therapist should give you a thorough physical exam and look at your range of motion. Whiplash pain can come from a range of issues often involving muscles, joints and soft tissues. However, if symptoms persist and your doctor thinks it is appropriate, you may also be offered X-rays, MRIs (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), CT (Computed Tomography) scans; and/or other tests.

During the acute period you should stick to the RICE protocol (rest, ice, compression, elevation), although gentle trigger point therapy followed by gentle stretching may be useful. You should never rest in bed for more than 3 days.

Much of the advice here will depend on how 'fresh' or severe your problem has become. As a rule if it has been there for more than six months then try the self help for three to four weeks and if there is no change then see a therapist. If your problem has been there for less time then you should get a proper diagnosis but can try our self help tips

for up to six weeks. If there is no improvement after six weeks then we would urge you to see a therapist.

Once you have a diagnosis you should review our self-help and advice pages and then put together a treatment plan. This should include: self massage and trigger point massage with balls/tools, stretching and modifying your lifestyle to avoid or modify any aggravating activities.

You can search for a local manual therapist at [www.nielasher.com/therapists](http://www.nielasher.com/therapists).

Look out for other workbooks in the Trigger Point Workbooks series.

We wish you a speedy recovery!

**Team NAT**

## **More About Trigger Points and Trigger Point Therapy**

### **Trigger Points**

We first heard the term trigger point used in 1942 by a woman called Dr. Janet Travell. She came up with the phrase to describe the painful lumps, or nodules, felt within tight bands of muscle. Since then, we've learnt a lot more about trigger points and the features they have in common:

- Pain, often exquisite, at the specific point
- A nodule set deep within a tight band of muscle
- When pressed, pain radiates out in a specific way that can be reproduced (map)
- The pain felt can not be explained by a neurological examination

One thing to remember about trigger points is that where you feel pain, may not be the same place as where the trigger point is embedded. This is partly the reason that some therapies fail to help because a therapist or doctor will tend to concentrate on the place that hurts, rather than locating the source of the pain.

What a trigger point does is to make its host muscle shorter and fatter, as well as reducing its level of efficiency. This can lead to significant pressure being put on your nerves and blood vessels. However, by taking the time to understand trigger points and their maps, you can get closer towards finding the source of your pain.

## **What are the physical characteristics of trigger points?**

Sadly, we do not have suitable language to define the sensation felt from a trigger point. The following points though should together provide an adequate description:

- Small nodules the size of a pinhead
- Pea-sized nodules
- Large lumps
- Multiple large lumps next to each other
- Sore spots embedded in tightly-stretched bands of semi-hard muscle that feels like a cord
- Rope-like bands lying next to each other like partially cooked spaghetti
- The skin over a trigger point is slightly warmer to the touch (due to increased metabolic/autonomic activity)

## **Acute and chronic pain**

It is estimated that in 75 to 95% of muscular pain cases myofascial trigger points are one of the main causes! In understanding more about trigger points, hopefully one day we can learn to “switch them off” and help end unnecessary pain for good.

Long-standing, or chronic pain, is due to the muscles around the pain area (and sometimes ones not even nearby) altering themselves in order to compensate for the pain. Trigger points are divided into two categories; active (painful), or inactive (latent). In addition, they can also cause pain in different parts of the body to the one they appear in.

When a trigger point becomes active, the pain emitted can mimic a wide range of medical conditions: angina, bursitis, prostatitis, appendicitis, cystitis, arthritis, esophagitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, pelvic



inflammatory disease, diverticulosis, costochondritis, sciatica, and pain from a heart or gall bladder attack.

### **What is Trigger Point Therapy?**

Many of us suffer from stiff, achy muscles caused by knots. Trigger point therapy encompasses a variety of ways to deactivate these painful knots and eventually get rid of them. One of the great things about trigger point therapy is that it's simple to perform, both at home with a partner, or on your own with some special trigger point tools.

If you combine trigger point therapy with some simple changes in your lifestyle, the results can be almost instant. And, what's more, they can last. Many manual therapists already use trigger point therapy as part of their daily work because it's a great way to:

- identify the correct trigger point(s)
- understanding how, or why, they manifest themselves in the first place
- work out the best way to deactivate the point(s)
- develop methods to stop them returning in the future

## **What happens when you press on a trigger point?**

### **By doing so you:**

- numb and reduce the pain, not only in the treated area, but also where you perceive the pain to be
- lessen the pain feedback pathways
- interrupt the pattern of pain and spasm
- stretch out tight muscles, which will indirectly affect other tissues
- open out the plastic-wrap-like myofascial bag that encompasses your muscles
- stimulate the blood supply helping to remove debris and toxins
- up your body's release of powerful pain-killing endorphins
- affect the autonomic/automatic nervous system

## **What is a referred pain map?**

When we're talking about trigger point referred pain, it's not the same as the referred shoulder pain you get from appendicitis, or, even the pain you get in your jaw or arm when having a heart attack. Instead, when you press on a trigger point for five or six seconds, it results in part, or all, of the pain map turning on, replicating your symptoms. Often, where the trigger point is, and where you feel the pain, are two entirely different places on your body.

## **Frequency of treatment**

If you plan to treat yourself at home through self-help, hands-on treatments, you should schedule no more than one session a day, with a three or four day gap in-between. If you are using balls, rollers or hooks on the other hand, then these can be used more often; up to 10 minutes a session, up to six times a day.

If you're getting treatment through a therapist, then he/she will plan a suitable course for you.

## **Possible side effects**

If you feel sore or bruised after treatment, don't worry. It's quite normal to feel this way for up to 36 hours afterwards. However, we don't know for certain yet whether this is a side effect, or a result of the treatment.

Cervical manipulation can result in some severe treatment reactions, which can be somewhat proportional to how effective the treatment was. These reactions can include: fatigue or "flu-like" symptoms, needing to urinate more often, feelings of sluggishness and increased sleepiness.

Our Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) deals with bodily functions like sweating, digesting, and breathing. During trigger point therapy, you might experience unaccountable ANS symptoms which include: sweating, redness, skin blanching, coldness, gooseflesh, excessive sweating, dysmenorrhea, toiletry dysfunction, earache, dizziness, stuffiness, and difficulty breathing.

## **Trigger Point Therapy - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How do I press/self-treat a trigger point?**

For those of you who have worked with trigger points before, this concept will be very familiar. For the rest of you, there are two very simple, safe and effective techniques: (1) ischemic compression technique (ICT), and (2) deep stroking massage (DSM).

### **How much pressure do I use?**

This is something that comes with experience, but as a rule of thumb the more painful the tissue, the slower and deeper the pressure. In all cases, the key words are “work slowly,” “sensitively,” and “thoroughly.” Deep stroking massage should feel a bit like gently squeezing toothpaste out of a tube.

### **Which direction should the pressure/force be applied?**

It is desirable to apply steady, deep, direct pressure to the nodule or pea-like trigger point. We have tried to represent this by the idea of a hot zone indicated within the images in the self help pages of this guide. The heart of the trigger point is located somewhere in this zone. You need to find the direction of pressure that, where possible, exactly reproduces the pain. It often amazes us that a slight change in the direction of the pressure can cause a totally different pain elsewhere. You will feel when you are “there.”

### **How do I know when I have done enough pressing?**

Hold the trigger point for 6 seconds:

If the pain diminishes rapidly, stay with it until the trigger point softens or evaporates beneath your pressure.

If the pain stays the same or gets worse, come away for 15 seconds and then try again.

Repeat 3 times if necessary.

If the trigger point still does not deactivate after the third repetition, note it down as it may be a secondary or satellite point.

### **What do I do after I have come away from the point?**

Follow all deep work with a gentle generalized effleurage massage. The area where you did the deep work may still be tender, but do not avoid it. This will help to dispel pain-inducing toxins from the area and stimulate the repair of the fascia.

### **How often should I treat a trigger point with a massage tool?**

This depends on how acute or chronic the problem is. For a chronic trigger point, you can work the area up to six times a day: persistence pays off. An acute problem may require less work than a chronic one. If you see an experienced practitioner, this will change. But note that the required frequency can vary from case to case because of a variety of factors.

### **Can I do any harm?**

If you identify the correct point and deactivate it with care and love, the answer is—probably not. There may well be some soreness for up to 48 hours after treatment. If the soreness lasts or gets worse, please discontinue treatment immediately and seek a medical opinion.

### **Will bruising occur?**

Bruising should not occur if you follow the instructions, but may occur if you are on blood-thinning medication. With time and experience, bruising becomes increasingly rare. We have found that it is not the depth of treatment (force) that will cause a bruise but usually the result of pressure being applied too quickly (velocity).

Try to feel the muscles and tender nodules beneath the skin. Arnica creams and tablets have been suggested to reduce the incidence and severity of bruising. Unfortunately some people bruise more easily than others.

### **Will I be sore afterwards or experience side effects?**

It is not uncommon to feel sore or bruised for 24–36 hours after treatment, but it is unclear whether these conditions are treatment effects or side effects. Treatment reactions are common and most severe following cervical manipulation; they are, somewhat controversially, proportionally related to treatment efficacy. Reactions may include other associated symptoms, such as fatigue or “flu-like” feelings, increased peeing, lethargy, and increased sleepiness.

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