



TRIGGER POINT THERAPY

If you've ever received professional trigger point therapy, you may be baffled at how it works. A therapist explores painful areas on the body with fingertips, searching for sore, tender trigger points. Once the trigger point is found, the therapist applies pressure with fingers, knuckles, or an elbow for about seven seconds. At first, clients may feel pain, but welcome relief quickly follows. Effective on chronic or occasional pain in any part of the body, learning to practice trigger point therapy on yourself can supplement professional sessions and provide interim relief, says Clair Davies, author of *The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook*.

NECK AND SHOULDER TENSION
In *Healing Self-Massage*, Kristine Kaoverii Weber suggests you explore the top of your shoulder with your fingertips until you find a thick muscle roll, about pencil-size. First, locate the trigger point. The area is described in a myofascial trigger points article in the December 2007 issue of *Anesthesiology Clinics*, as "a hyperirritable spot, usually within a taut band of skeletal muscle, which is painful on compression." Apply strong pressure with the fingertips for seven seconds. Repeat on the opposite shoulder.

Additionally, lie on the floor and place a tennis ball under your back, lined up between the shoulder blade and the spine. Roll the shoulder blade on the tennis ball until you find the sorest spot. Continue rolling the tennis ball, focused on this area, for about two minutes. Repeat on the opposite shoulder blade.

BACK SORENESS

An article in the March-April 2006 issue of *The Clinical Journal of Pain* recommends trigger point massage for pain relief. "Trigger points in the deep spinal muscles lie very close to the spine," Davies says. "They're found in the shallow trough between the spine and the long vertical mound of muscle on either side." At home, use a tennis ball for similar results. With fingertips, locate the trigger points near the spine, and then lie on the floor using the tennis ball to apply pressure, or place the tennis ball between your back and a wall.

According to Davies, trigger points in one part of the body often refer pain to other areas. Knee pain can be caused by the quadriceps muscle, Weber adds, and three specific trigger points help relieve the pain. Search for a trigger point on the top of the thigh, right below the groin, and apply pressure with the thumb. A second trigger point is on the top of the thigh halfway between groin and knee. Apply pressure with the heel of the hand. The third trigger point lies on the outside of the thigh, also midway between groin and knee. Use fingertips to apply pressure. m&b

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