

### **What is a trigger point?**

You may have heard chiropractors and massage therapists talking about trigger points, especially if they were found somewhere in your own muscle tissue. Maybe the area was noticeably sore (perhaps the reason you were seeking bodywork) or maybe we found some you didn't know you had. What are they and why do they cause discomfort?

Technically, a trigger point is an area of hyperirritability within a muscle fiber. They're usually found in tight muscles and can be felt as soreness, tenderness or referred pain to joints or other muscles.

Trigger points can be active or latent. An active trigger point is felt as noticeable pain and a latent one causes pain when pressure is applied to it. Latent trigger points are the ones we find in places where you didn't think you had one.

**Why are they called trigger points?** Both types (active and latent) can cause a referral of pain or other sensation such as tingling or ache, to other muscles and even to organs of the body, often remote from the original trigger point. Pressure on the trigger point can often "trigger" the pattern of referral.

The patterns of referral are often common. For example, if you're having pain or weakness down your arm, we frequently look at the muscles of your shoulder that commonly refer down the arm if trigger points are present. However, individuals can develop unique patterns...

Trigger points can cause muscle weakness or restricted range of motion and can develop for several reasons:

- direct trauma
- overuse of a muscle
- chronic postural imbalances
- exposure to cold

Other causes include viruses and other trigger points. These factors can cause a muscle to contract. If the contraction is held over time, the muscle becomes fixed in an involuntary holding pattern that can become the source of chronic pain.

**Who can we thank for the popularization of Trigger Point Therapy?** During the presidency of John F. Kennedy, Janet Travell, MD was appointed as White House physician, the first woman to have that position. Travell ...