

# Trigger Points and Neuromuscular Technique

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I'm often asked what trigger points are. One definition is that they are the most extreme expression of a tight muscle. A bit more descriptive definition is: "hyperirritable spots in skeletal muscle that are associated with palpable nodules in taut bands of muscle fibers. The palpable nodules are said to be small contraction knots and a common cause of pain." When you feel your therapist putting static pressure on a spot but feel the sensation elsewhere, you are likely feeling the trigger point referring pain along a nerve pathway. Sometimes a trigger point, one that is called an active trigger point, will refer pain on the nerve pathway without any outside stimulation. However, when you are not feeling this referring sensation without the stimulation of pressure on it, it is probably a latent trigger point. These trigger points are not only uncomfortable but can also have an effect on muscle patterns, coordination, and balance.

What causes trigger points? It can be many things or a combination of things, such as (even mild) dehydration, under- or overuse of the muscle, posture, nutrition, stress, or direct trauma to the area. The good news is twofold. By making healthy lifestyle choices, such as proper exercise; stretching; drinking plenty of water; eating healthy; and avoiding excess intake of certain things like alcohol, sugar, and smoking, you can help your body be less likely to develop as many trigger points. Secondly, when your massage therapist compresses a trigger point and you feel some local tenderness, referred pain, or local twitch response, feel free to hum with satisfaction knowing that your LMP is helping your trigger points to release, leaving you with less pain, better circulation in the area, and maybe even an opportunity for you to improve overall muscular health.