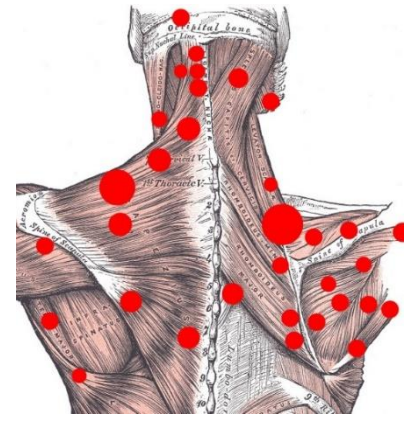


Muscle knots



What is a muscle knot

The word knot, is commonly used to describe a feeling of a tight area of tissue, but the scientific term is a myofascial trigger point. This is a hypersensitive point within a muscle or connective tissue region. They are commonly characterised by pain, or the feeling of tight band in the tissue, which is thought to be from muscle fibres and connective tissue having restricted movement between them, due to increased tension. They may be spontaneously painful (i.e active) or painful only with pressure (i.e latent). It is very common to have noticeable trigger points when pressing on to certain areas of muscle but pain will likely vary.

What can cause muscle knots?

Muscle 'knots' can be caused by many different factors such as

- From overuse e.g. heavy lifting or repetitive movements
- e.g. break ,strain or sprain
- Tension from mental and emotional stress
- Prolonged sitting or bed rest
- Direct injury around area

Trigger points can be common in various regions, often in an area which is being overused for example the upper traps and shoulder blades for over head athletes, and in the calfs for runners.

Symptoms of trigger points

Pain is the primary symptom of a muscle knot, whether this being when pressed or throughout day to day life. The levels of pain will vary for individuals due to different experiences if pain and thresholds. Other symptoms can be the muscle knot feeling swollen, tense, bumpy and cause an aching sensation.

Some other symptoms may be of a pain referral elsewhere away from the trigger point, which is why the area of pain may not always be the cause. To test this the therapist may press on the trigger point and see if this bring about symptoms or increases them.

How to reduce the likelihood of trigger points

With trigger points having many factors that may influence pain, they can commonly be the result of overuse, stress, prolonged postures and overall lifestyle habits. Here some ways to reduce the frequency of trigger points:

- Massage therapy
- Reducing sleep disturbances
- Regular movement from sedentary positions e.g. slouching at desk
- Not overtraining and allowing rest between sessions
- Regular exercise

