



Arizona Institute  
of Medicine & Pediatrics

## **Trigger Point Injections**

### **What Is A Trigger Point?**

Trigger points are painful areas of muscle that are tender and may feel like tight bands or knots when pressed. Pressing on the trigger point will “trigger” pain at the area of pressure and often in other areas. For example, pressing on a trigger point at the top of the shoulder may send pain down the arm or up into the neck. Trigger points are overactive muscle areas that can come from stress, using the muscle too much, or problems with the spine or with posture. They are most often treated by improved posture, reduced stress, and exercise. Sometimes, these treatments will not correct a painful trigger point, and your doctor may want to treat the problem with a trigger point injection.

### **How Are Trigger Points Injected?**

When doing this treatment, your doctor will mark the skin over the point, clean the skin, and insert a fine needle through the skin into the trigger point area, causing a small “twitch”. You may be able to feel this twitch. It tells us that the trigger point has been reached. The action of the needle itself is what causes the trigger point to relax.

### **What Are The Risks Of Trigger Point Injection?**

The risks of this treatment depend a lot on what part of the body will be treated. The risk is very small – about the same as it would be for any injection. Some patients have had bleeding or infection. Some patients are allergic to the medicines used. The doctor should be told of these allergies before any treatment takes place.

### **How Will I Feel Afterward?**

You should feel relief right away after the trigger point treatment, as the medicine will numb any pain from the shot. This relief will last 4-12 hours or until the medicine wears off. You may then feel some soreness, as you might after a flu shot. While these treatments do not always work, most patients get relief for days, weeks, and sometimes months. These treatments may be done every few weeks to months, if needed, but scars may form if treatment is done too often.

### **What Else Should I Do After The Injection?**

When you are pain free, use the time to stretch the treated muscle, perform your exercise program, and take any other steps that will keep the trigger point from coming back.