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Functional Dry Needling Releases Muscle Pain

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FDN can release muscle tension and spasms.

Bradley Wellness, LLC

When I've overdone it on my bike or at the gym and my neck and shoulders feel like they're in the vice grip of an anaconda, what I most want is to have my physical therapist stick sharp needles into me.

You read that right – needles. Functional [dry needling](#) (FDN), which also goes by the name of intramuscular stimulation, intramuscular manual therapy (IMT), or trigger point dry needling (TDN) is a treatment technique in which a specially trained physical therapist inserts small filament type needles to release tight muscles with the intent of taming that anaconda and reducing muscle pain and spasm.

We often get muscle tightness or spasm after an injury, while it can also accompany a degenerative process – like the arthritis in my shoulder. This tightness and spasm causes compression and irritation of the nerves exiting the spine. When they're inflamed and angry it causes a domino effect of protective spasm that snakes through all of the muscles to which they're connected, so that you can actually get referred pain that travels to other areas.

So now you know the premise of trigger point dry needling, but you wonder, does it hurt?

Well, you're already in pain and FDN doesn't hurt any worse than the piercing spasms which can keep you from your favorite activities. I've been receiving FDN treatments from my physical

therapist for the past two years when things flare up. As she inserts the needle and my muscle responds, I feel a tickly twitch, which means my muscle fibers activated a heightened response and now they realize they can calm down.

Trisha McNutt, PT, DPT, an Arvada outpatient orthopedics practitioner, says “I have noted very positive outcomes related to decreased pain and improved range of motion of various joints. Because of this, the patient gains improved ability to restore strength, flexibility and endurance.”

Remarkably, FDN manages to affect multiple body systems - neurological, biomechanical, immune, inflammatory and vascular – simultaneously with just the poke of that sharp little needle, says McNutt.

McNutt adds that FDN will allow you to jump back into your regular activities again faster than you would with traditional treatment. That’s great news for people like me who aren’t content to just sit on the couch and wait it out.

Andi Renshaw PT, a Denver Tech Center practitioner, also confirms that “FDN is one of the most effective ways to treat acute and chronic myofascial trigger points.”

Renshaw, who deals with an old volleyball injury that left her with bulging discs in her neck, says FDN may even prevent you from having to go under the knife: “I once thought surgery was necessary, but now I’m convinced that FDN can keep me active and pain free.”

Lindy Royer, PT, PMA-CPT, owner of [Park Meadows Pilates & Physical Therapy](#) says "Functional dry needling is a breakthrough in the rehabilitation world. It is a powerful tool for the treatment of chronic or acute pain, and along with the whole body movement approach we incorporate at Park Meadows [Pilates & PT](#), can help restore the body to full function in a shorter period of time. I have seen incredible results in our patients and clients after just a few sessions with our FDN certified PT, Lisa Hamilton."

To find out more about FDN and if it’s right for you:

- Park Meadows Pilates & [Physical Therapy](#) - Lindy Royer, PT [parkmeadowspilates.com](#)
- Denver Tech Center - Andi Renshaw PT, [athleticpilates.org](#)
- Arvada - Trish McNutt PT, DPT - [fitphysicaltherapy.com](#)