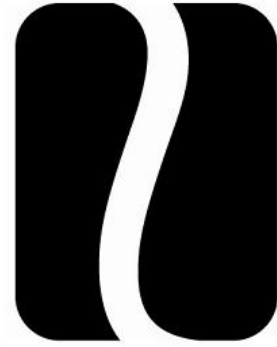


# Spinal Dynamics of Wisconsin SC



## Frequently Asked Questions about Intramuscular Stimulation/ Dry Needling Technique

### What is Intramuscular Stimulation (IMS)?

Intramuscular Stimulation (IMS,) also known as trigger point Dry Needling Technique (DNT), is offered for treatment of muscle pain. The approach is based on the philosophy that stimulating tissue within muscles can be beneficial.

The basic premise is that IMS/DNT minimizes the influence of contractures (trigger points) within taut bands of muscle tissue that can spontaneously trigger local pain or refer pain to more distant locations.

Solid filament needles of small diameter are inserted into muscle directly at a myofascial trigger point. Myofascial trigger points (sometimes considered as “knots”) are related to the production and maintenance of the pain cycle. Introducing “dry” needles into the area can reduce pain by:

- softening the trigger point
- creating a chemical analgesic effect
- causing a reflexive neurological response to relax the tight muscle

### Why is it called “dry” needling?

This approach differs from the use of needles that inject liquid substances such as corticosteroids, saline or Botox. Research has shown that use of a solid, “dry” needle can be as effective as injections to relieve pain.

Dry needling can offer some advantages over medication injections in certain cases, including:

- less costly
- more efficient (typically more pain can be treated at one session)
- less waiting time between treatments
- less tissue damage (a dry needle is much smaller in diameter than an injection needle)
- better suited for certain muscles due to a numbing effect of the medication

### How does IMS/DNT differ from acupuncture?

Both acupuncture and IMS/DNT are similar in that they both use needles to address pain. Their rationale and use in treatment are quite different, however.

Acupuncture is a discipline. Dry needling is a technique. Acupuncture has its foundation in Oriental Medicine and uses needles to work in conjunction with meridians, or energy fields, running throughout the body. IMS/DNT is based in Western Medicine and extends from the

models of soft tissue mobilization, myofascial release, or trigger point therapy. IMS/DNT uses needles to interfere directly with the source of muscle contraction and dysfunction.

Dry needling is generally performed with the same needles acupuncturists use for traditional and modern acupuncture practice, but that does not turn any clinician into an acupuncturist when using dry needling nor does it make dry needling an exclusively acupuncture technique.

### **Who should consider dry needling as a treatment?**

This technique is an option for people seeking treatment for pain, especially patients who have had chronic and/or unresolved pain. Any patients with pain related to muscles and joints are good candidates. Examples of diagnoses are:

- sciatica and other nerve entrapment/pain
- back and neck pain
- headache
- recurring muscle strains
- pelvic pain
- fibromyalgia

### **Who offers IMS/DNT?**

Most professionals who treat pain can be trained in IMS/DNT. Today it is used throughout the world by medical doctors, dentists, physical therapists, chiropractors, and even some acupuncturists.

Dry needling is a growing area of expertise among physical therapists (PTs) in the United States. PTs practice dry needling as part of their clinical practice and use the technique in combination with other physical therapy interventions.

To practice IMS/DNT, physical therapists must receive post-graduate training. Continuing education coursework involves nearly 100 hours of instruction and hands-on training, along with testing to secure certification. Physical therapists can practice IMS/DNT only in states that recognize the approach within the scope of PT practice.

### **Why is the use of IMS/DNT growing among physical therapists?**

Physical therapists are experts in musculoskeletal systems and disorders. IMS/dry needling is a natural fit within this discipline for several reasons:

- Physical therapists study muscles and nerves, and their function in everyday life. During clinical training, PTs learn how to approach pain within the full body system of posture and movement patterns. PTs know how to identify musculoskeletal body processes that can lead to or cause pain. They provide treatment to mobilize restricted areas, and prescribe exercises to enhance flexibility, strength, and posture/movement control. This is all done with a respect for important body vessels such as nerves and blood vessels as well as organs like the kidney and lungs.
- PTs rely on extensive knowledge of muscle anatomy and skills in palpation (the use of the hands to find and treat taut bands within muscle fibers; i.e.; trigger points). PTs who study dry needling learn how to optimally place needles into trigger points to reduce and manage pain. Dry needling often extends (or augments) what the physical therapist is already doing to manipulate and fix specific problem areas (such as trigger points, tender muscles, scar

tissue, localized muscle spasm.)

- Skilled physical therapy evaluation includes palpating and feeling for key areas of tenderness including referred pain points which a patient may not even realize are tender and contributing to current pain complaints. The problems causing pain are often distant from where the pain is actually located. The therapist does not randomly place needles at the site of pain, but does so with a method to treat the root of the problem. Lack of success in treatment often occurs because care providers are not getting to the real source of the pain.

#### **I've never heard of IMS/DNT. Is it new?**

No, it is not new as a treatment technique. Dry needling has been practiced widely in many countries for decades. While it is relatively new on the PT landscape in the US, physical therapists in more than 20 states offer dry needling services. State PT boards must approve IMS to be included in the practice of physical therapy (PT) in their states.

#### **When did physical therapists in Wisconsin start offering this?**

The Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association recognized dry needling as a physical therapy practice in 2009. Soon thereafter, a group of private practice PTs in Wisconsin joined together to host a continuing education seminar on dry needling. The 100-hour course series was offered in early 2011 by world renowned leaders in IMS/DNT, Jan Dommerholt and Dr. Robert Gerwin of Myopain Seminars. PTs attending his Wisconsin-based course were the first in the state to receive IMS/DNT training and certification.

Dommerholt was the first in the US to offer IMS/DNT. In addition to practicing at his clinic in Bethesda, Maryland, he also practices at a clinic in the Netherlands. Myopain Seminars is the premier post-graduate medical and physical therapy continuing education company with a focus on myofascial trigger points and dry needling.

#### **What Milwaukee-area clinics offer this technique?**

The following private-practice PT clinics offer IMS/DNT:

- Body Mechanics (downtown and Pewaukee locations)
- Freedom Physical Therapy (Fox Point and Grafton locations)
- Keystone Physical Therapy (Brookfield location)
- Spinal Dynamics of Wisconsin (Wauwatosa location)

While operating their practices from a competitive position, the PTs from these clinics are opting to collaborate in this endeavor to educate the community about IMS/DNT and its availability in Southeastern Wisconsin. Each of these clinics is independently owned and operated (none is affiliated with a national organization or local/regional healthcare system.) More at: (Insert URL)

#### **Is it covered by insurance?**

Most insurance plans allow physical therapists to bill for IMS/DNT under routine therapy billing. Questions about insurance and bill can be addressed with staff at any of the above physical therapy practices.

**For information about this service, please call our clinic at 414/302-0770.**