

Self Trigger Point Therapy for Shoulder Pain

Now more than ever we need an easy and effective way to ease pain. My name is Curt Green and I've been a Neuromuscular therapist for 19 years. The majority of that time I've been using trigger point therapy to help ease my clients' pain and dysfunction. Over the years we are talking thousands of clients. In a normal session a common complaint we talk about and make a plan to correct is shoulder pain. When we talk about shoulder pain we mean the front, back, or side of the entire shoulder area and even the arm. Most of us have a forward shoulder posture from our daily activities; it's easy to see if you do. Stand sideways in front of a mirror and look at the tip of your shoulder; if it's in front of your ear, congratulations you have forward shoulder posture. This posture can be helped with simple strengthening of your upper/mid back. We will talk more about that soon. The point of this article is how to address shoulder pain. You may have pain in your front shoulder around the biceps tendon or around the back of your shoulder near the shoulder blade. As this pain persists it may radiate down your arm and manifest as elbow pain or even carpal tunnel syndrome. In trigger point therapy we start by thinking that pain isn't always coming from where you feel it. It's easy to tell if the issue is where you feel it. Try the "1 finger test": It's simple, press with a finger where you 'feel' the pain. If it's tender and painful at the site it means the cause may be there. In this case the area may need rest or additional medical attention. If it's not tender there or the pain is tough to pinpoint and tends to come and go it may be referred from another area. Trigger points send or refer by a complex process that's outside the scope of this article. What's important to know is where the "real cause is." In the majority of clients there are 2 main factors in shoulder/arm pain, a muscle imbalance with a tight chest (pecs) and weak posterior shoulder and trigger points in the muscles on the shoulder blade. The way we deal with this is to treat the chest first. Think of it this way, who makes more noise the victim or the perpetrator? The chest muscles are tight and are the cause but we feel it in the screaming shoulder which is over stretched and weak. Let's address those tight pecs first. In our method of self therapy we

will use a tennis ball or lacrosse ball. The tennis ball is softer and has more give, therefore it gives less pressure. I prefer a lacrosse ball to use on myself. Hold the ball in your hand and roll it around the tight chest muscles on your opposite side. Use a pressure of a 4-5 out of 10 and roll the entire area (women avoid breast tissue). After 2-3 minutes of rolling, stand in a doorway and lean forward with the arm you've been working off to your side against the doorway. Gently lean forward and stretch that pec for approximately 20 seconds. Now place the ball on the floor and lie on your back with the ball on the back of your shoulder of the side you are working on. You can adjust your pressure by how much of your body is supporting you. Less support = more pressure. We use a 1 to 10 scale to describe pressure where 1 is minimal and 10 is extreme. Keep the pressure around a '4-5' and the ball on your shoulder blade by moving your body around. This muscle covering your shoulder blade is the infraspinatus, one of the rotator cuff group and a major cause of shoulder and arm pain. Roll the ball in a small area of a few inches and feel for especially tender areas. Look for an area that causes some pain or sensation in a different area of your shoulder or your arm. When you find a spot that refers pain to another area, bingo! That's a trigger point. Take the pressure up to your '7' and stay there for 10-15 seconds then continue to scan around looking for tender areas. I like to keep my elbow bent and rotate my arm to scan around the shoulder blade. Return to the original trigger point and treat it again. You can treat a trigger point 3 times in a session. Let's deal with the weakness now. While still lying on your back, bend your elbows to 90 degrees and keep them at the sides of your body. Press the back of both of your arms into the floor at about 60% of your max pressure for 5 seconds. Repeat this three times. You can do the self trigger point work every few days to an area as long as it's not sore from the last session. The strengthening exercise can be done 3-5 times a week. Pay attention to any pain you feel and expect some soreness the next day, full results may take a couple of days. With some awareness of posture issues, a basic understanding of muscle imbalances, and regular schedule of self massage time, I'm confident you can achieve a great deal of pain relief and posture improvement. If needed I

look forward to having a discussion with you about your pain and how a session of trigger point therapy with me can help. Send me an email at curtgreenmt@live.com or text at 702-722-7977

Warning: Before beginning any self massage therapy, consult your physician.