

Acupuncture or "Dry Needling"?

Written by the authors of AcuGuide



Have you heard the buzz about “dry needling”?

In many parts of the U.S., health care practitioners are offering dry needling to help their patients find relief from pain. Read on to learn more about dry needling and if it is the right choice for you.

WHAT IS "DRY NEEDLING"?

Dry needling is the practice of inserting an acupuncture needle into a specific area of the body, usually a trigger point.

Trigger points are bound areas of muscle fibers, or a knot, that signify pain and potentially other health issues.

While this practice has been around for millennia as part of the acupuncture tradition, it was popularized by medical doctors Janet Travell and David Simons in the 1940s.

The treatment was termed “dry needling” to distinguish it from a similar practice that used hypodermic needle injection in trigger point therapy.

IS IT ACUPUNCTURE?

Dry needling “appears” to be acupuncture. However, there are two major distinctions patients should be aware of.

1. Dry needling is symptom-focused.

Dry needling is performed as a localized treatment, addressing just the symptom.

In contrast, an acupuncturist treating the same condition will select points – often avoiding the affected area – to elicit both symptomatic relief and lasting prevention.

Note: Acupuncturists may offer “dry needling” as the term becomes more mainstream. Rest assured acupuncturists adhere to the highest levels of safety and patient care.

2. Dry needling is not well-regulated.

At the time of this writing, the training requirements for dry needling are well below those of acupuncturists.

Physical therapists, chiropractors, and other health care providers performing dry needling may have as few as 300 hours or a weekend course.

Acupuncturists, by contrast, complete a minimum of 3,000 hours of theoretical and clinical training, are nationally certified in Clean Needle Technique, and are extremely knowledgeable about human anatomy and physiology.

CHOOSE WISELY

Our best advice? When considering dry needling, be sure to check your practitioner’s education and certifications as well as your state’s recommendations.