



All About These 'Knots' In Your Muscles

What are they? An area of the muscle where the muscle fibers will not 'let go,' usually where the nerve connects to the muscle. The blood flow slows or stops to this area causing an accumulation of metabolic waste products and lack of oxygen and nutrients to the area. This results in pain, muscle tightness and weakness.

What causes them? Accidents, trauma, strains, overuse, bony misalignment, abnormal bone structure, postural stress, nutritional deficiencies, metabolic disorders, (hypothyroidism), tension, anxiety, allergies, infections, cold and damp weather, hormonal imbalances.

What makes them go away? Massage or sustained pressure directly to the area. Slow strokes or sustained pressure for 8-20 seconds. This helps the muscle to 'let go,' stimulates circulation, stretches the muscle, and causes endorphins (natural pain killers) to be released. A massage therapist, friend or yourself can do this.

How can I work on these areas myself? By using a Thera Cane (internet, \$37), your hands, or a ball (tennis, super ball, golf ball) in a sock. A great resource is The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook by Claire Davies (can be ordered at Barnes and Noble \$19.95).

How should I feel during and after massaging these areas? This type of massage usually 'hurts good.' The next day you may feel tender to the touch, bruised, like you've exercised the area, or been punched there. Your motion should be improved. This is OK. It's not OK to feel burning, stiffer, or have less range of motion. Let me know if this was your response. Applying cold packs to the area can decrease the discomfort. Drinking lots of water after a massage will help you to respond better.

How can I prevent a recurrence? These bothersome 'knots' in muscles many times tend to recur. In order to best prevent this, try to identify any causes and eliminate these. This can make all the difference in whether treatment will succeed and its benefits will last. Massage done by yourself or someone else, and keeping your muscles strong and flexible will help very much in prevention.

Christine Pearson, PT, MT