

## Chiropractic Treatment for Myofascial Pain Syndrome

In addition to the many joints and bones that comprise the thoracic spine, there is a network of interwoven and layered muscles. These muscles are used to stabilize and move the spine, aid in respiration, and move the shoulder and arm.

Fascia is a layer of connective tissue that contributes to the supportive structure of the spine and musculoskeletal system. The fascia invests, or surrounds, the muscles and allows for the smooth gliding of one muscle upon another. Investing fascia helps to prevent muscles from adhering to each other.

With injury, chronic postural stress, or overuse, myofascial trigger points or myofascial adhesions may develop – all commonly referred to as myofascial pain syndrome.

Chiropractors treat myofascial pain syndromes such as myofascial trigger points or adhesions with manual myofascial therapy. This therapy normally includes the use of direct pressure upon the trigger point, or the use of active anchor-and-stretch myofascial release techniques.

Chiropractors also utilize specific exercises and physical modalities to treat myofascial pain syndromes. Some chiropractors utilize acupuncture or dry-needling techniques to treat myofascial pain.

Myofascial therapy relieves soft tissue restrictions that cause pain. Some causes of chronic myofascial pain or low back pain are easier to diagnose than others: trauma (such as a car accident or fall), cumulative posture misalignment or mechanical deficits, a compressed nerve from a herniated disc, or inflammatory conditions.

When pain is caused by myofascial tightness within the fascial system (the web of connective tissue that spreads throughout the body and surrounds every muscle, bone, nerve blood vessel, and organ to the cellular level) the diagnosis is more difficult, as fascia restrictions do not show up on MRI scans or X-rays. Yet, those restrictions can play a significant role in creating pain and malfunction in the structure of the spine, extremities and organs.

### WHAT IS MYOFASCIAL THERAPY?

Myofascial Therapy (also known as myofascial release therapy or myofascial trigger point therapy) is a

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### Treatments

- Chiropractic Manipulations
- Chiropractic Adjustments
- Heat/Ice Therapy
- Massage
- Arthrostim
- Proadjuster
- Exercise
- Decompression
- Nutritional Counseling
- Stretching and Postural Counseling Supports
- Frequency Specific Microcurrent
- Traction

"Wake up Feeling Good."

type of safe, low load stretch that releases tightness and pain throughout the body caused by myofascial pain syndrome, which describes chronic muscle pain that is worse in certain areas known as trigger points.

Myofascial release (MFR) therapy focuses on releasing muscular shortness and tightness. There are a number of conditions and symptoms that myofascial release therapy addresses.

Many patients seek myofascial treatment after losing flexibility or function following an injury or if experiencing ongoing back, shoulder, hip, or virtually pain in any area containing soft tissue.

Other conditions treated by myofascial release therapy include Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) disorder, carpal tunnel syndrome, or possibly fibromyalgia or migraine headaches. Patient symptoms usually include:

- ✓ Tightness of the tissues that restricts motion or pulls the body out of alignment, causing individuals to favor and overuse one hip or shoulder, for example
- ✓ A sense of excessive pressure on muscles or joints that produces pain

- ✓ Pain in any part or parts of the body, including headache or back pain.

The goal of myofascial therapy is to stretch and loosen the fascia so that it and other contiguous structures can move more freely, and the patient's motion is restored.

Therapy sessions follow a pattern similar to physical therapy for post-operative rehabilitation. An initial appointment will be devoted to locating the areas of the fascia that appear to be restricted, and measuring the level of loss of motion or loss of symmetry in the body.

The specific releases to different parts of the body vary, but generally include gentle application of pressure or sustained low load stretch to the affected area. Progress is gauged by the level of increased motion or function experienced, and/or decrease in pain felt by the patient.

#### ADDITIONAL TREATMENTS

Myofascial therapy can be a precursor and complement to other treatments. Patients who engage in myofascial therapy also may benefit from other forms of nonsurgical care that aim to control pain and keep muscles and joints warm and loose. These include:

- ✓ Using non-prescription pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- ✓ Applying heat to soothe constricted muscles or using ice to calm swollen areas
- ✓ Performing self-stretching exercises to maintain flexibility and increase range of motion or aerobic exercise to increase blood flow to the affected areas.

Myofascial therapy can also enhance or assist other treatments to increase effectiveness such as acupuncture, manipulation, physical therapy, or occupational therapy. By targeting specific areas of the fascial system, myofascial therapy can provide pain relief for patients with restricted flexibility and movement, thus allowing patients to return to normal movement and greater function.

*For more information about myofascial pain and relief, visit <http://www.spine-health.com/treatment/physical-therapy/myofascial-release-therapy>*

***Talk to Dr. Chapman about specific questions related to your unique health situation.***

**Contact Dr. Chapman**  
**to learn more or schedule an appointment**  
(406) 721-5780

<http://www.spine-health.com/doctor/chiropractor/greg-chapman-missoula-mt>