

# SIDE EFFECTS OF DRY NEEDLING TREATMENT

Like all treatments, dry needling can cause side effects. The following ranking is used:

- **Very Common:** more than 1 out of 10 treated people
- **Common:** 1 to 10 out of 100 treated people
- **Uncommon:** 1 to 10 out of 1,000 treated people
- **Rare:** 1 to 10 out of 10,000 treated people
- **Very Rare:** less than 1 out of 10,000 treated people, including singular incidents

The following symptoms were experienced by patients treated with dry needling:

- **Common: 1 to 10 out of 100 treated people**  
Common side effects are bleeding, bruising and pain. Hematoma is possible because of the lesion of small vessels. Sometimes, small amounts of blood can come to skin when performing dry needling treatment.
- **Uncommon: 1 to 10 out of 1,000 treated people**  
Uncommon side effects observed in the context of dry needling treatment include: inflammation at the application site, swelling, strong pain during needling, and local muscle pain. Nerve irritation or nerve injury is also possible. This can cause sensation difficulties or a temporary weakness in the associated musculature. Furthermore, headache, fatigue, and vegetative symptoms like vertigo and nausea were experienced. An initial aggravation of the symptoms which lead to the treatment is possible.
- **Rare: 1 to 10 out of 10,000 treated people**  
Rare side effects include: local infection, redness, itching, sweating, decrease of blood pressure, increase in blood pressure, unconsciousness, tachycardia, breathing difficulties, vomiting, worsening health state, generalized muscle pain, restricted movement, joint problems, feeling of coldness, menstrual problems, depressive mood, anxiety, sleep disturbance, restlessness/nervousness, disturbed vision, and tinnitus.
- **Very Rare: less than 1 out of 10,000 treated people, including singular incidents**  
Very rare side effects observed in the context of dry needling treatment include: palpations, constipation, diarrhea, gastric symptoms such as spasms, circulatory disturbance, lesions of blood vessels, systemic infection, euphoria, nightmares, balance issues, disturbance of speech, disorientation, shivering, and eye irritation. Very rarely dry needling needles can be forgotten or break. During treatment on the thorax, a too-deep insertion of a dry needling needle can cause an accumulation of air in the pleural cavity (pneumothorax). These are very rare and due to poor needling technique. Additionally, injuries to the central nervous system and the pericardium have been reported.

**Some of the side effects mentioned above can influence your fitness to drive!**

***If side effects occur during or after treatment, please inform your therapist/doctor.***

## ADAPTED FROM

- Witt, Claudia M., Daniel Pach, Benno Brinkhaus, Katja Wruck, Brigitte Tag, Sigrid Mank, and Stefan N. Willich. "Safety of Acupuncture: Results of a Prospective Observational Study with 229,230 Patients and Introduction of a Medical Information and Consent Form." *Complementary Medicine Research* 16, no. 2 (2009): 91-97.
- Boyce D, Wempe H, Campbell C, et al. ADVERSE EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THERAPEUTIC DRY NEEDLING. *Int J Sports Phys Ther.* 2020;15(1):103-113. doi:10.26603/ijsp20200103.
- Halle, John S., and Rob J. Halle. "PERTINENT DRY NEEDLING CONSIDERATIONS FOR MINIMIZING ADVERSE EFFECTS - PART ONE." *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy* 11, no. 4 (August 2016): 651-62.
- Halle, John S., and Rob J. Halle. "PERTINENT DRY NEEDLING CONSIDERATIONS FOR MINIMIZING ADVERSE EFFECTS - PART TWO." *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy* 11, no. 5 (October 2016): 810-19.

For a more in depth look, please see our blog "[What Patients Experience During Dry Needling?](#)"

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- Use this as a supplement resource to help your patients understand the possible risks/side effects of dry needling treatment to encourage informed consent before treatment.