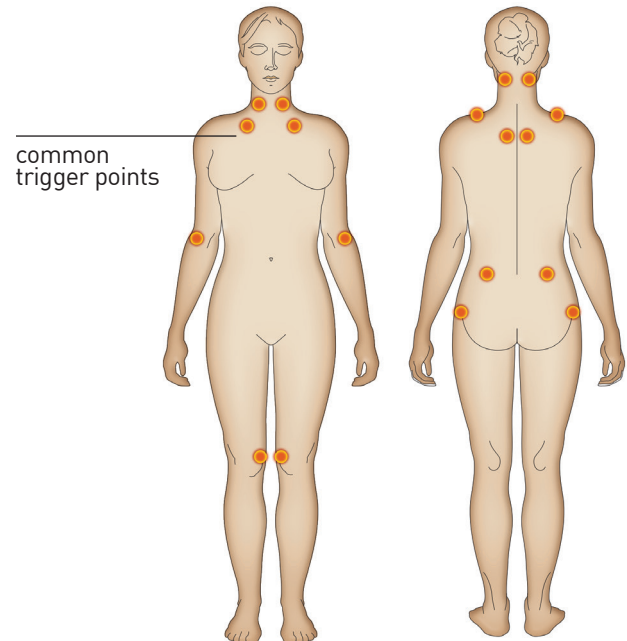


Overview

Chronic myofascial pain (CMP), also called myofascial pain syndrome, is a painful condition affecting the muscles and the sheath of the tissue – called the *fascia* – that surround the muscles. CMP can involve a single muscle or a group of muscles.

Pain originating in the muscles and fascia is very common. Nearly everyone at some point suffers from this type of pain, known as *myalgia fasciitis* or *myofasciitis*. CMP, however, involves pain that is chronic, or long lasting, and is associated with specific trigger points. CMP most often occurs in people between the ages of 30 and 60 years. It affects men and women equally.



Causes & Symptoms

No one is sure what causes CMP. Possible causes include mechanical factors – such as having one leg longer than the other – poor posture, stress and overuse of muscles. Exercising or performing work activities using poor techniques can also put excessive strain on muscles, leading to CMP. In addition, anxiety and depression can cause increased muscle tension, leading to significant myofascial pain. Trigger points might be activated by overwork, fatigue, direct trauma and cold.

The most notable feature of CMP is the presence of *trigger points* that are tender to the touch and create a twitch response leading to pain. Trigger points are tender points that cause pain that can be felt in another area of the body, called *referred pain*.

Trigger points might be “*active*” or “*latent*.” An *active trigger point* is always sore and can prevent the full use of the muscle, leading to weakness and decreased range of motion. A *latent trigger point* does not cause pain during normal activities, but is tender when touched and can be activated when the muscle is strained, fatigued or injured.

Other symptoms associated with CMP include a sensation of muscle weakness, tingling and stiffness. The pain associated with CMP might also lead to problems sleeping and poor sleep may also worsen CMP.

Diagnosis

A careful evaluation of your medical history and physical examination, including a review of symptoms, will help your Spine Center provider determine if you have Chronic Myofascial Pain. Your provider will likely perform a detailed exam of the affected muscles, including strength and range of motion testing. Your provider may also rub the suspected trigger points to see if the muscles respond, or twitch, and cause pain in a predictable pattern or specific region.



Treatment

Treatment options might include:

Physical therapy – At Rochester Regional Health our therapy programs include stretching, postural and strengthening exercises. It is also important to address any factors – such as poor posture, workplace ergonomics or mechanical problems – that might be contributing to CMP pain.

Medicine – Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen and naproxen might be used to help reduce pain.

Massage therapy – Therapeutic massage can loosen tight muscles and relieve cramping or spasms.

Injections – This involves injecting a pain medicine (local anesthetic) directly into the trigger points.

Follow-Up Care & Care Information

It might not be possible to prevent all episodes of CMP, but the following tips might help reduce their occurrence and hasten recovery:

- Improve your posture
- Reduce your body weight
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
- Learn stress-management techniques
- Use proper techniques at work, and during exercise and sports
- Improve sleep