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# YOGA <sup>TM</sup> MAGAZINE

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

*Andie  
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ON HOW YOGA KEEPS  
HER IN TOP FORM

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# TOP 10 TIPS

VALERIE DELAUNE

## to understanding TRIGGER POINTS to effectively Treat Pain

In spite of decades of research, Myofascial Pain Syndrome caused by trigger points continues to be one of the most commonly missed diagnoses. With any pain-generating condition, trigger points will form if pain has lasted long enough. The two most common symptoms of trigger points that you will notice are tender 'knots' or tight bands in the muscles, and referred pain. You may also notice weakness or lack of range of motion. You may have symptoms you would not normally associate with muscular problems, such as menstrual pain, headaches, diarrhoea, dizziness, hearing problems, visual disturbances, nausea, or urinary frequency (to name a few), though these may also be caused by non-trigger

point related causes. The most important thing to know about treating trigger points is that they refer pain both in the area in which the trigger point is located, and/or to other areas of the body, in fairly consistent common patterns. The most common referral patterns have been well documented and diagrammed. At least half of commonly found trigger points are not located within their area of referred pain. Knowledge of referral patterns gives us a starting point of where to look for the trigger points that are actually causing pain.

### **Find out where trigger points are located that are causing your referred pain**

Unless you know where to search for trigger points, and you only work on the areas where you feel pain, you probably won't get relief. For example, trigger points in the iliopsoas muscle (deep in your abdomen) can cause pain in your lumbar area. If you don't check the iliopsoas muscle for trigger points and only work on the quadratus lumborum muscle in the lumbar area, you will not get relief. There are books, charts, and websites available that will help you figure out where your trigger points might be located.

### **Learn how to apply pressure to your trigger points**

Once you know where to look for trigger points, you can apply pressure for eight to 60-seconds either with your fingers, or by lying on a tennis or golf ball. It should not be too painful to apply pressure, or you will need to lighten your pressure or lay on a softer surface or softer ball. You will need to search the entire muscle for trigger points, not just where trigger points are most commonly located. Start with once per day, and then increase treatment frequency as tenderness decreases. If you are very sore for more than a day, skip a day of treatment, then re-start with less pressure and frequency. Complete treatment guidelines can be found in my book *Pain Relief with Trigger Point Self-Help*.

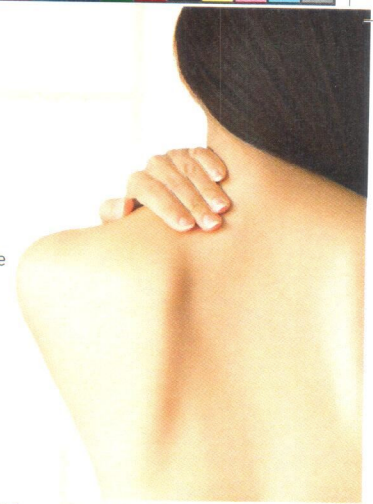


### Find out what is causing your trigger points

Trigger points may form after a sudden trauma or injury, or they may develop gradually. Common initiating and perpetuating factors are mechanical stresses, injuries, nutritional problems, emotional factors, sleep problems, acute or chronic infections, and organ dysfunction and disease. Resolving these factors is crucial to getting long-term relief.

### Eat well and drink water

It is easy and relatively inexpensive to improve your nutrition and water intake to see if it will decrease your symptoms. Eating healthy, nutritious food is ideal, but supplementation with a multivitamin and multimineral may be necessary, depending on your situation.



### Don't assume your pain can't be treated

People often assume that if a parent had the same type of condition, it must be genetic, and they'll just have to learn to live with it. You learn many things from your parents - eating habits, exercise habits, how you deal with stressful situations, even posture and gestures - and all of which can influence your health.

### Find a health care professional who can assist you

If possible, find a physiotherapist, physical therapist, or massage therapist who is trained in treating trigger points, who can help you identify and eliminate the things that are causing your pain and other symptoms.



### Avoid conditioning exercises initially

Holding yoga poses may aggravate your trigger points at first. Find a yoga class with an instructor who can help you modify poses that are causing you any problems. Focus on stretching and breathing. With any exercise programme, including yoga, underestimate what you can do. Gradually add increments in duration, rate, and effort that will not cause you to be sore or reactivate trigger points.

### Learn to breathe properly

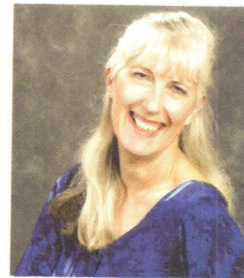
Breathing will oxygenate the muscles, and stretch the respiratory muscles. Breathe all the way down into your belly.

### Be kind to your muscles

Warm up and stretch before exercising, keep your muscles warm, and lift properly. Vary your activities so you are not doing any one thing for too long. Notice where you hold tension and practise relaxing those areas.

### See your health care provider immediately if...

Your pain is severe with sudden onset, is accompanied by redness, heat, or severe swelling, or you develop rashes or ulcers that don't heal. You will also want to seek help if you develop poor circulation, painful varicose veins, and very cold legs, feet, arms, or hands.



Valerie DeLaune, L.Ac., is a licensed acupuncturist and certified neuromuscular therapist. Valerie has written four books on trigger point self-help techniques. Her latest book, Pain Relief with Trigger Point Self-Help has just come out in the U.K. Valerie teaches workshops in the U.S. and currently resides in Alaska. [triggerpointrelief.com](http://triggerpointrelief.com)