

# PERFECT SPOTS FOR TRIGGER POINT THERAPY

## 14 MOST COMMON AREAS FOR TRIGGER POINTS

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 1 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR TENSION HEADACHES

Under the back of the skull must be the single most pleasing and popular target for massage in the human body. No other patch of muscle gets such rave reviews. It has everything: deeply relaxing and satisfying sensations, and a dramatic therapeutic relevance to one of the most common of all human pains, the common tension headache. And no wonder: without these muscles, your head would fall off. They feel just as important as they are. For pain: almost anywhere in the head, face and neck, but especially the side of the head, behind the ear, the temples and forehead. Related to: headache, neck pain, migraine. Muscles: suboccipital muscles (recti capitis posteriores major and minor, obliqui inferior and superior)

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 2 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR LOW BACK PAIN

This Perfect Spot lives in the “thoracolumbar corner,” a nook between your lowest rib and your spine — right where the stability of the rib cage gives way to the relative instability of the lumbar spine. Muscle tends to bunch up around this joint between the last of the thoracic vertebrae and the first of the lumbar. The sweet spot consists of trigger points in the upper-central corner of the quadratus (square) lumborum muscle and in the thick column of muscle that braces the spine.

FOR PAIN: anywhere in the low back, tailbone, lower buttock, abdomen, groin, side of the hip. RELATED TO: low back pain, herniate disc. MUSCLE(S): quadratus lumborum, erector spinae.

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 3 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR SHIN SPLINTS

Perfect Spot No. 3 is in your shins — seemingly an unlikely place for muscle knots! But there is meat there, and if you’ve ever had shin splints then you know just how vulnerable that meat can be. Even if you’ve never suffered so painfully, your shins probably still suffer in silence — latent trigger points in the upper third of the shin that don’t cause symptoms, but are plenty sensitive if you press on them. FOR PAIN: in the shin, top of the foot, and the big toe. RELATED TO: shin splints, drop foot, anterior compartment syndrome, medial tibial stress syndrome. MUSCLE(S): tibialis anterior.

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 4 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR NECK PAIN, CHEST PAIN, ARM PAIN, AND UPPER BACK PAIN

Deep within the Anatomical Bermuda Triangle, a triangular region on the side of the neck, is the cantankerous scalene muscle group. Massage therapists have vanished while working in this mysterious area, never to be seen again. The region and its muscles are complex and peculiar, and many lesser-trained massage therapists have low confidence working with them. FOR PAIN: in the upper back (especially inner edge of the shoulder blade), neck, side of the face, upper chest, shoulder, arm, hand. RELATED TO: thoracic outlet syndrome, lump in the throat, hoarseness, TMJ syndrome. MUSCLE(S): the scalenes (anterior, middle, posterior)

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 5 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR TENNIS ELBOW AND WRIST PAIN

Just beyond your elbow, all the muscles on the back of your forearm converge into a single thick tendon, the common extensor tendon. At the point where the muscles converge, in the muscles that extend the wrist and fingers, lies one of the most inevitable myofascial TrPs in modern civilization: Perfect Spot No. 5. It is constantly and greatly aggravated both by computer usage today and by the use of a pen in simpler times — and by the occasional tennis match, then and now. FOR PAIN: in the elbow, arm, wrist, and hand. RELATED TO: carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis), golfer’s elbow (medial epicondylitis), thoracic outlet syndrome, and several more. MUSCLE(S): extensor muscles of the forearm, mobile wad (brachioradialis, extensor carpi radialis longus and brevis), extensor digitorum, extensor carpi ulnaris.

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 6 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR BACK PAIN, HIP PAIN, AND SCIATICA

When you have back pain, buttock pain, hip pain, or leg pain, much or even all of your trouble may well be caused by trigger points in the obscure gluteus medius and minimus muscles, a pair of pizza-slice shaped muscles a little forward of your hip pocket. Other muscles in the region are usually involved as well, such as the gluteus maximus, piriformis, and the lumbar paraspinal muscles. However, the gluteus medius and minimus are a bit special: their contribution to pain in this area is particularly significant, and yet people who have buttock and leg pain rarely suspect that much of it is coming from muscle knots so high and far out on the side of the hip. FOR PAIN: in the low back, hip, buttocks (especially immediately under the buttocks), side of the thigh, hamstrings. RELATED TO: sciatica, trochanteric bursitis, low back pain. MUSCLE(S): gluteus medius and minimus.

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 7 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR BRUXISM, JAW CLENCHING, AND TMJ SYNDROME

Your masseter muscle is your primary chewing muscle — not the only one, but the main one — and it covers the sides of the jaw just behind the cheeks. It’s also the main muscle that clenches your jaw and grinds your teeth, unfortunately, and it’s one of the most common locations for trigger points in the entire human body. It is probably an accomplice in most cases of bruxism (that’s Latin for “grinding your teeth”) and temporomandibular joint syndrome (a painful condition of the jaw joint), plus other unexplained painful problems in the area. FOR PAIN: in the side of the face, jaw, teeth (rarely). RELATED TO: bruxism, headache, jaw clenching, TMJ syndrome, toothache, tinnitus. MUSCLE(S): masseter.

### PERFECT SPOT NO. 8 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR YOUR QUADS

A lot of quadriceps aching, stiffness and fatigue emanates from an epicentre of “knotted” muscle in the lower third of the thigh, in the VASTUS LATERALIS, a huge muscle — one of your biggest — that dominates the lateral part of the leg. Stretching it is effectively impossible, but massage is an option: although often shockingly sensitive, Perfect Spot No. 8 can also be quite SATISFYING. It also often complicates or contributes to other problems in the area, especially runner’s knee (iliotibial band syndrome). FOR PAIN: in the lower half of the thigh, knee. RELATED TO: iliotibial band syndrome, patellofemoral pain syndrome. MUSCLE(S): quadriceps (vastus lateralis, vastus medialis, vastus medialis, rectus femoris).

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 9 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR YOUR PECTORALS

The “pecs” are popular muscles. Of the 700+ muscles in the human body, the pectoralis major is one of the dozen or so that most people can name and point to. It also harbours one of the most commonly-encountered and significant — yet little known — trigger points in the human body, and can produce pain much like a heart attack in both quality and intensity. FOR PAIN: anywhere in the chest, upper arm. RELATED TO: “heart attack,” respiratory dysfunction. MUSCLE(S): pectoralis major.

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 10 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR TIRED FEET (AND PLANTAR FASCIITIS!)

The tenth of the Perfect Spots is one of the most popular of the lot, and right under your feet — literally. It lies in the center of the arch muscles of the foot. This is one of the Perfect Spots that everyone knows about. No massage is complete without a foot massage! FOR PAIN: in the bottom of the foot. RELATED TO: plantar fasciitis. MUSCLE(S): arch muscles

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 11 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR UPPER BACK PAIN

This “spot” is too large to really be called a “spot” — it’s more of an area. The thick columns of muscle beside the spine are routinely littered with muscle knots from top to bottom. Nevertheless, there is one section of the group where massage is particularly appreciated: from the thick muscle at the base of the neck, down through the region between the shoulder blades, tapering off around their lower tips. There is no doubt that this part of a back massage feels even better than the rest — even the low back, despite its own quite perfect spots, cannot compete. FOR PAIN: anywhere in the upper back, mainly between the shoulder blades. RELATED TO: scoliosis. MUSCLE(S): erector spinae muscle group

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 12 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR LOW BACK PAIN (SO LOW THAT IT’S NOT IN THE BACK)

At the top of the gluteal muscles lies a Perfect Spot among Perfect Spots: a sneaky but trouble-making brute of a TrP that commonly forms in the roots of the gluteus maximus muscle, just BELOW the pit of the low back, but experienced as low back pain. This is the kind of spot that the Perfect Spots concept is really all about — not only does it tend to produce a profound and sweet ache when massaged, but the extent of the pain that spreads out around it is almost always a SURPRISE. FOR PAIN: in the lower back, buttocks, hip, hamstrings. RELATED TO: low back pain, sciatica, sacroiliac joint dysfunction. MUSCLE(S): gluteus maximus

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 13 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR LOW BACK PAIN (AGAIN)

Some of the Perfect Spots are perfect because they are “surprising” — they aren’t where you thought they’d be, and it’s delightful to discover the real source of pain. Others are perfect because they are EXACTLY where you expect them to be — and what a relief it is to be able to treat them. Perfect Spot No. 13 is perhaps the ultimate, the quintessential “right where I thought it was” trigger point: right at the very bottom of the thick columns of muscle, in the “pit” of the low back. FOR PAIN: in the low back, buttocks, hamstrings. RELATED TO: low back pain, sciatica, sacroiliac joint dysfunction. MUSCLE(S): erector spinae muscle group at L5

#### PERFECT SPOT NO. 14 — MASSAGE THERAPY FOR SHOULDER PAIN

I avoided adding Spot 14 to this series for many years, because it’s a little tricky to find. But precision is not required: although there is one specific spot that’s especially good, nearly ANYWHERE just under the ridge of bone on the shoulder blade is worthwhile, and often a surprising key to pain and stiffness everywhere else in the shoulder... but ESPECIALLY all the way around on the other side, facing forward. FOR PAIN: any part of the shoulder, and upper arm. RELATED TO: frozen shoulder, supraspinatus tendinitis. MUSCLE(S): infraspinatus, teres minor

For more information check out the rest of the website: [http://saveyourself.ca/articles/spot-10-foot-arch.php#all\\_spots](http://saveyourself.ca/articles/spot-10-foot-arch.php#all_spots)