

Pressure Point Therapy (Myofascial Release)

by James G. Halvorson, DC, DACAN

PRESSURE POINT THERAPY (Myofascial Release): Myofascial trigger points are hyperirritable spots in the fascia surrounding skeletal muscle. They are tight little knots that you feel in your muscles and may or may not be tender to the touch. One of the best ways to treat them is with massage or pressure. Lie on or lean back against tennis balls, softballs or baseballs (putting them into a long sock will help hold them together and allow you to reach all areas of the spine). **Do pressure point therapy at least 2-3 times/day, EVERY DAY THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. IT'S LIKE BRUSHING AND FLOSSING YOUR TEETH.** Even when you feel good, you never stop brushing and flossing. Doing pressure point therapy every day can help reduce tension in the muscles which can help prevent flare-ups of pain. Take little breaks at work to roll out your muscles. Do them in the car while driving to and from work. Do them at home while watching TV. **Keep the balls out where you can see them so that you are reminded to use them.**

Mid back/Upper back/Shoulders:

- Put 3 tennis balls into a long sock. Place them over your shoulder and lower them down so they are situated between the spine and the shoulder blade. **DO NOT HAVE THE BALLS DIRECTLY ON THE SPINE.** The balls should be stacked **VERTICALLY** in the sock, just off to the side of the spine.
- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart for stability. Move your body from **SIDE-TO-SIDE**. You should feel the balls massaging the muscles along the side of the spine.
- If you can't feel good, firm pressure, walk your feet out a couple of inches from the wall. Bring your hips and butt out from the wall (like a plank). You will feel more pressure on your back as you move your body away from the vertical position. If there is too much pressure on your spine and it causes pain, move your feet in a bit. The more **VERTICAL** you are, the less pressure and less pain you will feel.
- Rock slowly from side to side for a couple of minutes, move your feet back under you, put the balls over your other shoulder and repeat on the opposite side.
- To get the upper trapezius muscles (on top of the shoulder), use the softball in the door jam. You have to bend over to push straight in on the ball. Bend at your hips, tighten your core and use the Founder's position to protect your back.

Low Back:

- Take the string of 3 tennis balls and place them horizontally across the small of your low back.
- Widen your stance for balance and bring your feet out away from the wall a couple of inches.
- Keep your low back and butt against the wall to maintain good pressure against the tennis balls.
- Bend your knees and let your butt slide down the wall. Stand back up again. This is called a **WALL SQUAT**. You do not have to go all the way to 90 degrees knee flexion.
- Go **UP** and **DOWN** doing the wall squats. You should feel the tennis balls going up and down massaging your lumbar paraspinal muscles. If you feel the middle ball on your spine, use 2 or 4 balls and have your spine in the gap.

Glutes and Piriformis (Butt and Hip area):

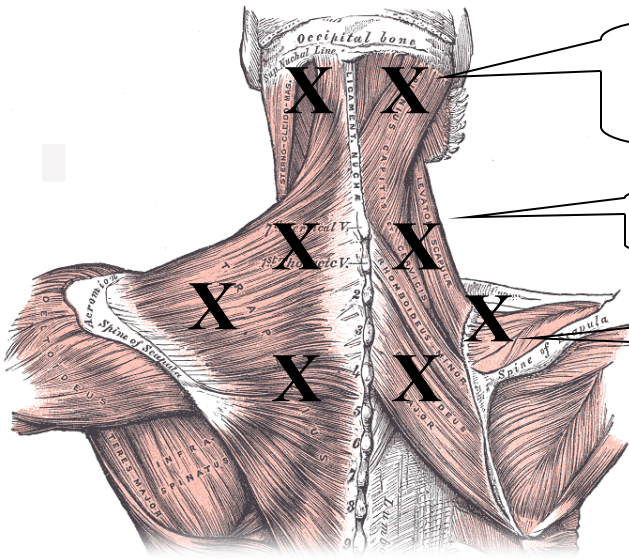
- Stand at a 45 degree angle to the wall and place a softball into the glute area.
- You can glide side to side and rotating your hips in a little circle at the same time.
- You can do this for a minute, then repeat on the opposite side
- If the softball is too painful, try standing a little more vertical and push less to see if that feels better. If it is still too tender, you may have to use softer balls (like the tennis balls).

Neck and Head:

- Put the softball behind your neck and lean up against the wall. Widen your stance a bit and rock back and forth, side to side. You should feel nice pressure in the neck muscles.
- Turn to a 45 degree angle and work one side at a time. The side to side movement should be very small so that the ball stays in place. If you go too far to the side, the ball may shoot out from behind your neck.
- If the softball is too hard and it causes pain, don't push so hard or get a softer ball.

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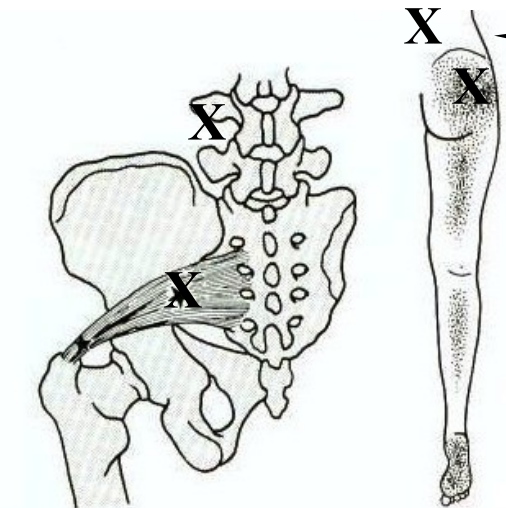
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Pressure point therapy into the suboccipital muscles (at the base of the skull) can help with neck pain and headaches.

Pressure point therapy into the neck muscles

Pressure point therapy into the shoulders and mid back muscles



Pressure point therapy ABOVE the sacroiliac joint (the dimple) into the lumbar paraspinal muscles and BELOW the SI joint (into the gluteus and Piriformis muscles) can help relieve low back, butt, hip, and sciatic nerve tension and pain.



Tennis Ball



Softball or baseball if you like more pressure



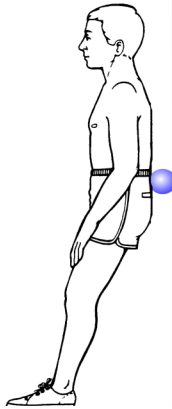
TheraCane



Styrofoam roller on Piriformis



Stick Massager



Use the ball up against the wall