

SHEET 15 Self trigger point treatment and exercises for temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain

The following muscles can house sore spots that contribute to TMJ pain. This is how you can treat them yourself:

- You are looking for sore spots in the muscle, particularly those that re-create the pain you are experiencing.
- When you find a sore spot wait and hold until you feel the pain start to decrease.
- Go back to this point a couple of times until it is no longer tender on palpation.
- The pain you are experiencing from treating the trigger point should not be more than a 6 on a pain scale of 1–10. If the point is more painful than this you need to use less pressure.

Sternocleidomastoid (SCM)

- Stand in front of a mirror and rotate your head noticing the muscle that pops out on the side of your neck as you do so.
- Bring your head back to neutral and gently grasp this muscle near its starting point by the ear.
- Gently squeeze the muscle between your thumb and the soft knuckles of your first finger.
- Work the full length of the muscle to the collarbone, treating any trigger points you find. **See Figure S15.1**

Trapezius

- This muscle is found at the top of the shoulder.
- Work from neck to shoulder, grasping the muscle between your thumb and forefingers and treating any trigger points you find. **See Figure S15.2**



Figure S15.1



Figure S15.2

Masseter

- To find this muscle clench your jaw; the masseter is the strong muscle that pops out at the side of your face.
- Relax your face and explore the masseter muscle from cheekbone to jaw with your soft fingertips.
- Treat any trigger points you find. **See Figure S15.3**

Opening and closing

- After treating the trigger points now practise opening and closing your mouth several times. Aim to get a little bit further each time without straining or causing too much pain.
- Rest and repeat for a couple of cycles.



Figure S15.3