

MUSCLE TENSION

So many of us carry repressed and trapped emotions within multiple areas of our bodies, without even knowing it. In fact, we can go years completely oblivious to the blocked energy that our muscles are holding on to. This repressed energy is responsible for countless ailments and chronic health conditions that cause us great suffering. The fact is that your body doesn't forget.

Your body is the most honest and obvious way to access trapped feelings and even traumatic memories. No matter how much you try to ignore, intellectualize or suppress how you feel, **your body knows the truth.**

If you are struggling with chronic tension in your neck, shoulders, back, thighs, legs, or any other area of your body, this article may help you get to the root of your pain, once and for all.

WHAT CAUSES CHRONIC MUSCLE TENSION?

According to various studies and papers, we develop chronic muscle tension as a result of four different causes.

The first cause is **social conditioning**. Social conditioning starts in early childhood and is reinforced throughout the rest of our lives by our parents, friends, teachers, family members, and society at large. A lot of the muscle tension that we develop is the result of unspoken social beliefs that we were taught to adopt as a way of being 'acceptable' or likable. For example, many of us were taught that 'only babies cry,' so as children, we learned to suppress our tears and sadness in order to 'not be a baby.' Many of us were also taught that expressing anger is a bad thing as we were punished as children for expressing it. This form of conditioning is strengthened throughout adulthood, particularly in our workplaces where expressing anger is seen as 'unprofessional' and potentially dangerous to our job security.

The second cause of muscle tension is **trauma**. Traumatic experiences can range from being spanked as a child, all the way to extreme violence. Trauma may have been deliberately inflicted on us (e.g. rape or physical assault) or accidental (e.g. a car crash). When these traumatic experiences aren't consciously dealt with, they can result in chronic fear, stress, and even occurrences of PTSD. This chronic anxiety, anger, and grief tends to get stored within the body resulting in muscle tension which contributes to numerous other illnesses such as fibromyalgia, digestive disorders, mental illnesses, and even cancer.

The third cause of muscle tension is **psychological tension**. Psychological tension is any form of anxiety, frustration, sadness or anger that we develop as a result of our perceptions. For example, we may develop psychological tension as a result of our thoughts regarding our coworker (e.g. they're lazy) or of us being stuck in traffic (this shouldn't happen). Our automatic tendency to attach to these thoughts and take them seriously is what causes us psychological tension. The more negative,

fearful or fault-finding our perspective is, the more tension we tend to store in our muscles.

The final cause of muscle tension is **environmental stressors and habits**. For example, our sedentary lifestyles (working at a desk all day) tend to exacerbate our physical pain because we aren't giving our muscles a chance to expel the tension. Other habits such as poor posture, lack of sleep, drug use, unhealthy eating, and environmental pollution tend to increase the likelihood of us developing chronic muscle tension.

CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC MUSCLE TENSION

Through the years, the field of psychosomatic medicine has conducted numerous studies exploring the mind's effect on the body, and vice versa.

In terms of muscle tension caused by mental and emotional factors, we tend to experience many health issues:

- Mood disorders (anxiety, depression, SAD)
- Joint pain and increase chance of injury
- Dysmenorrhea (menstruation problems)
- Insomnia
- Skin problems (acne, psoriasis)
- Asthma and hayfever
- Headaches and migraines
- Palpitations and chest pain
- Nausea
- Fibromyalgia
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- GI issues (diarrhea, bloating, constipation, cysts)
- Hypertension/High blood pressure
- Sexual dysfunction (premature ejaculation, painful sex)
- Increased tendency towards addictive behavior
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This list is by no means complete, and there are *many* other consequences of muscle tension.

9 TYPES OF MUSCLE TENSION CAUSED BY TRAPPED EMOTIONS

According to a study conducted in 2012, 25.3 million Americans (11.2%) suffer from chronic pain every day and 17.6% suffer from severe levels of pain. This single study revealed a grim reality: so many of us are suffering from muscle tension on a daily basis. Surely there must be a better way to live.

As a person who has struggled with chronic neck and shoulder pain for many years, The author was lucky to discover the source of her pain, thanks to a healing method known as 'floating.' Thanks to her experience in a float tank (also known as a sensory deprivation tank or [isolation tank](#)) she was able to discover that her muscle tension was intimately linked to old memories and repressed emotions. Lying in the dark, with no sound or sensory input on top of 800 pounds of dissolved Epsom salts,

she gradually started feeling her muscles unwind. As each muscle group relaxed and spasmed, thoughts and emotions fired through her head. For example, as her spine let go into the water, she could feel grief pour through her and memories from childhood run through her mind. She could feel her upper thighs release their contraction as anxiety and loneliness bubbled up through her. She could feel the fear and burden be released from her shoulders and neck area.

Although everyone is different and there are no (known) absolute places in the body where outright emotions are stored, there are certain places which tend to accumulate specific types of emotions.

Below are nine of the most common types of muscle pain and what underlying emotions are connected to them:

1. SHOULDER TENSION = BURDENS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When we feel weighed down by the stress of life we tend to accumulate these feelings within our shoulders. Ever heard the expression 'carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders'? Shoulder tension seems to be intimately linked to social and emotional responsibilities, including unconsciously carrying the burden of *other* people's pain. As such, many empaths, healers, and caretakers struggle with chronic shoulder muscle tension.

2. NECK TENSION = FEAR AND REPRESSED SELF-EXPRESSION

Neck tension is often connected to throat chakra issues, such as the inability to communicate clearly or be your authentic self around others. Fear and anxiety are also frequently stored in this area, particularly as a physical response to danger (as the neck is a vulnerable area) or strange environments. Neck muscle tension is also related to trust issues.

3. UPPER BACK = GRIEF, SORROW, AND SADNESS

Unexpressed and unreleased sadness tends to build up within the upper back region. As this area is close to the heart chakra, it is also where emotions connected to heartbreak and loss are stored. For instance, if you carry around grief regarding a loved one, or your family at large you will likely feel tense in this area.

4. MIDDLE BACK = INSECURITY AND POWERLESSNESS

Healing traditions such as reflexology link middle back pain to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and insecurity. If you're feeling unsupported by other people you probably carry tension here.

5. LOWER BACK = GUILT, SHAME, AND UNWORTHINESS

Lower back issues often correlate with feelings of low self-worth and lack of self-acceptance. Feelings such as guilt, shame, and even sexual inadequacy or trauma can be stored here as well.

6. STOMACH = INABILITY TO PROCESS EMOTIONS

The expression 'I can't stomach it' appropriately describes abdominal muscle tension. If your abdomen feels stiff or sore, you might struggle to process both negative (and even positive) emotions.

7. INNER THIGHS = FEAR OF VULNERABILITY

Are you nervous and untrusting around other people? If you struggle with social anxiety, you might also have inner thigh pain. Because our legs are biologically programmed to run when we first spot danger, fear towards others is often stored here.

8. OUTER THIGHS = FRUSTRATION AND IMPATIENCE

How fast do you live life? The more quickly and mindlessly you live, the more likely you have frustrated and impatient energy stored in your outer thigh muscles. Our jobs and personal lives can also contribute greatly to muscle tension in this area.

9. BUTTOCKS = ANGER AND RAGE

How often do you have to deal with people who are a 'pain in the bum'? Anger and suppressed rage are often stored in the buttocks. Pay attention next time you feel your head boil: is your butt tensing up as well?

Adapted from an article by Alethia Luna