

TRAPEZITIS

Introduction

Trapezititis is a common musculoskeletal condition characterized by inflammation of the trapezius muscle, leading to pain, stiffness, and discomfort in the upper back, neck, and shoulders. It is frequently observed in individuals with poor posture, repetitive strain injuries, or excessive muscle use. Physiotherapy plays a crucial role in the management of trapezititis, focusing on pain relief, improving mobility, and strengthening muscles to prevent recurrence.

Anatomy of the Trapezius Muscle

The trapezius muscle is a large, triangular-shaped muscle extending from the base of the skull to the lower thoracic spine and laterally to the scapulae. It has three functional parts:

- **Upper fibers:** Responsible for elevation and upward rotation of the scapula.
- **Middle fibers:** Aid in retraction of the scapula.
- **Lower fibers:** Assist in depression and upward rotation of the scapula.

Causes of Trapezitis

1. **Poor Posture:** Prolonged sitting with a forward head posture, slouched shoulders, or improper ergonomics can strain the trapezius muscle.
2. **Repetitive Strain:** Continuous use of computers, smartphones, or heavy lifting without adequate muscle conditioning.
3. **Muscle Overuse:** Activities that involve excessive or sudden use of the upper body, such as weightlifting or carrying heavy loads.
4. **Stress and Anxiety:** Emotional tension can cause muscle tightness and trigger pain in the trapezius.
5. **Weak Core Muscles:** A weak core can lead to poor spinal stability, increasing stress on the trapezius.
6. **Trauma or Injury:** Sudden impacts, whiplash, or sports injuries may lead to trapezititis.
7. **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Lack of movement and prolonged inactivity can contribute to muscle stiffness and pain.

Symptoms of Trapezitis

- Localized pain in the upper back, neck, or shoulders.
- Stiffness and restricted movement of the neck and shoulders.
- Tenderness and muscle tightness.
- Radiating pain to the head, arms, or upper back.
- Headaches caused by muscle tension.
- Fatigue and muscle weakness.
- Increased pain with prolonged activities or stress.

Diagnosis of Trapezitis

A physiotherapist can diagnose trapezitis through:

- **Clinical Evaluation:** Assessing posture, muscle tightness, and range of motion.
- **Palpation:** Identifying tender points and trigger points in the trapezius.
- **Functional Tests:** Evaluating muscle strength, flexibility, and joint movement.
- **Pain Assessment:** Determining pain patterns and aggravating factors.
- **Imaging (if necessary):** X-rays or MRI to rule out other conditions like cervical spondylosis.

Physiotherapy Management

Physiotherapy plays a significant role in relieving symptoms and preventing recurrence. The management plan includes:

1. Pain Relief Techniques

- **Cold Therapy:** Applying an ice pack for 10-15 minutes to reduce inflammation.
- **Heat Therapy:** A warm compress or heating pad to relax tight muscles.
- **TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation):** To provide pain relief by stimulating nerve endings.
- **Ultrasound Therapy:** Helps in reducing muscle tightness and increasing blood flow.

2. Manual Therapy

- **Trigger Point Release:** Pressing on painful knots to relieve muscle tension.

- **Myofascial Release:** Stretching and massaging the fascia to improve mobility.
- **Soft Tissue Mobilization:** Techniques like kneading and deep tissue massage.
- **Joint Mobilization:** To improve neck and shoulder joint mobility.

3. Stretching Exercises

- **Upper Trapezius Stretch:** Tilting the head sideways to stretch the muscle.
- **Levator Scapulae Stretch:** Bringing the chin towards the armpit to stretch tight muscles.
- **Chest Stretch:** Stretching the pectoral muscles to counteract forward shoulder posture.
- **Scapular Retraction:** Bringing the shoulder blades together to relieve strain.

4. Strengthening Exercises

- **Shoulder Blade Squeeze:** Squeezing the scapulae together to strengthen postural muscles.
- **Resistance Band Rows:** Strengthening the middle trapezius and rhomboids.
- **Wall Angels:** Enhancing shoulder mobility and posture.
- **Isometric Neck Exercises:** Strengthening neck muscles without excessive movement.

5. Postural Correction

- **Ergonomic Adjustments:** Using a chair with proper lumbar support and adjusting screen height.
- **Postural Awareness:** Regular self-checks to maintain neutral spine alignment.
- **Core Strengthening:** Engaging the core to support the upper body.

6. Activity Modification

- **Frequent Breaks:** Avoiding prolonged sitting and incorporating movement.
- **Proper Lifting Techniques:** Using legs instead of the back while lifting.
- **Reducing Phone Use:** Avoiding excessive forward head posture.

7. Breathing and Relaxation Techniques

- **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** To reduce stress and muscle tension.

- **Meditation and Yoga:** Enhancing overall flexibility and reducing muscle stiffness.

Prevention of Trapezitis

- Maintain proper posture while working and sleeping.
- Regularly perform stretching and strengthening exercises.
- Stay hydrated to maintain muscle elasticity.
- Avoid carrying heavy bags on one shoulder.
- Manage stress through relaxation techniques.
- Use ergonomic workstations and take frequent breaks.