

# Dry needling is common procedue around the NFL

LAKE FOREST, Ill. (AP) — Arizona Cardinals tight end Trey McBride heard about what happened to Pittsburgh Steelers star T.J. Watt — and McBride plans to continue his weekly dry-needling sessions.

“It’s something I do frequently. I’ve never had an issue like that,” he said. “But with every treatment, everything that you get done, I mean, there’s risk to everything.”

The risk that goes along with dry needling — at least in certain areas — caught many off guard last week when Watt was sent to the hospital with a partially collapsed lung sustained during the procedure. The 2021 NFL Defensive Player of the Year is out indefinitely after having surgery.

Dry needling is a treatment used by physical therapists and acupuncturists to treat pain and movement issues, according to the Cleveland Clinic. The medical professionals insert needles under the skin to target trigger points — knotted or tender areas — in muscles.

“I think there is some of that classic acupuncture muscle tension effect,” said Chicago Bears center Drew Dalman, who has the treatment five to 10 times per year. “I’ve always used that in terms of soft tissue-type issues.”

## Dry needling gives NFL players relief for tight muscles

Dry needling is often part of a larger pain management plan, according to the Cleveland Clinic. The treatment is designed to alleviate



Steelers linebacker T.J. Watt celebrates after sacking Bears quarterback Caleb Williams during the first half of a game on November 23 in Chicago.

tightness and tender areas in muscles by increasing blood flow to the area. It also can spark the release of endorphins that help with the pain.

The treatment is called dry needling because the thin needles don’t have any medication.

“It just releases tight muscles,” New York Giants linebacker Bobby Okereke said. “Obviously you have

some fascial tension, so it helps release some of the fascia, too. It can kind of give you like a targeted trigger-point release where massage might not be able to get the muscle to release or different stretching techniques might not. Sometimes you stick a needle deep into that area, and it just gets it to relax.”

Two of the most common tech-

niques are superficial — when the practitioner inserts the needle into the bottom layer of skin above the trigger point — and deep — when the needle is inserted deep into the muscle to penetrate the trigger point. There is also the pistoning technique, when the practitioner quickly moves the needle up and down through the tissue.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, dry needling is approved for use in 37 states and Washington, D.C. Training and certification can vary by state. Pennsylvania does not explicitly allow or ban the practice.

Washington Commanders guard Sam Cosmi said he started using dry needling during his college days at the University of Texas. Playing his fifth NFL season, he has a session every three weeks or so.

He described the sensation of the needle going in as a “bite.”

“I only do it when I have to do it. It’s not my favorite thing,” Cosmi said.

## Despite some concerns, NFL players will likely continue with dry needling

The use of dry needling varies around the NFL.

Baltimore Ravens defensive lineman John Jenkins said he has a session every week. The 36-year-old Jenkins, who is listed at 6-foot-3 and 360 pounds, has been using the treatment for about a decade.

“I do a lot of lower extremities, when it comes to dry needling,” he said. “It helps me loosen up a lot of

muscles that are pretty much tense. I’m a bigger person, right? So whatever helps me to loosen the muscles, I’m going to pursue that.”

Tennessee Titans center Lloyd Cushenberry said he uses the treatment when he thinks it’s necessary. He cited his recovery from an Achilles tendon injury in November 2024 and a calf issue this past off-season.

“Sometimes, like with my calf, I felt some relief,” he said. “But most of the time I’ve done it, it’s, I don’t know, maybe a placebo, I don’t know. I haven’t found too much, like it wasn’t a drastic difference afterwards. But when I did it with my calf this offseason ... it felt a little better.”

Some players are very particular about the areas where they will have the treatment. Cosmi said he doesn’t have any sessions on his torso. Cushenberry said he sticks to his lower body.

“I’m a lower-body guy. If I’m getting dry-needled, stick it in my legs,” Commanders receiver Jaylin Lane said.

Lane said he heard about what happened with Watt and it made him nervous. Atlanta Falcons offensive lineman Kyle Hinton also was aware of what happened, but he said it hadn’t changed how he felt about the treatment.

“I trust all professionals, at least around here,” Hinton said. “I’m sure they have a great athletic training staff in Pittsburgh as well. But, you know, sometimes just stuff happens.”

## Hoops

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The teams were tied at 9-all after the first and Keystone took a 25-24 lead into halftime. The hosts re-

sponded in the third to post a 34-32 edge. They pulled away in the fourth quarter to seal the victory.

Dom Corcetti led the Panthers with a game-high 23 points. Bronson Irwin added nine points.

Nathan Frederick paced Clarion with 20 points. Derek Smail had 12

points. Mason Burford added seven.

## C-L 68, Redbank Valley 54

STRATTANVILLE — Reagan Parker buried seven treys and had 24 points to lead the Lions past the Bulldogs in KSAC play.

Clarion-Limestone opened with a

19-10 lead and held a 35-26 halftime advantage. Redbank Valley cut the deficit to 47-40 after three quarters. The Lions went 11 for 16 at the foul line in the fourth to take the win.

Paul Craig added 23 points, three rebounds, three steals and an assist in the win. Brendan Bracken had

eight points and five rebounds. Casey Kemmer posted seven points, nine rebounds and an assist. Parker added five rebounds and four blocks.

Braylon Wagner scored a game-high 21 points for the Bulldogs. Jaxon Huffman added 13 and Kaden Sturgeon had nine.

## THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

NHL STANDINGS										
EASTERN CONFERENCE										
Atlantic										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Detroit	35	19	13	3	41	108	115			
Montreal	34	18	12	4	40	110	118			
Boston	35	20	15	0	40	114	109			
Tampa Bay	34	18	13	3	39	107	90			
Florida	33	18	13	2	38	106	103			
Ottawa	33	16	13	4	36	105	104			
Toronto	33	15	13	5	35	105	108			
Buffalo	33	15	14	4	34	103	112			
Metropolitan										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Carolina	33	22	9	2	46	112	91			
Washington	34	19	11	4	42	110	88			
N.Y. Islanders	34	19	12	3	41	102	96			
Philadelphia	33	17	10	6	40	99	94			
New Jersey	34	19	14	1	39	99	104			
N.Y. Rangers	36	17	15	4	38	91	96			
Pittsburgh	33	14	10	9	37	103	106			
Columbus	34	14	14	6	34	102	120			
WESTERN CONFERENCE										
Central										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Colorado	33	24	2	7	55	133	77			
Dallas	34	22	7	5	49	115	90			
Minnesota	35	21	9	5	47	109	89			
Utah	36	17	16	3	37	111	106			
St. Louis	36	13	15	8	34	88	125			
Winnipeg	33	15	16	2	32	98	100			
Chicago	34	13	15	6	32	94	105			
Nashville	33	13	16	4	30	93	115			
Pacific										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Vegas	32	16	6	10	42	97	92			
Anaheim	34	20	12	2	42	121	112			
Edmonton	35	17	12	6	40	119	119			
Los Angeles	34	15	10	9	39	88	90			
San Jose	34	17	14	3	37	102	113			
Calgary	35	14	17	4	32	91	105			
Seattle	32	12	14	6	30	79	102			
Vancouver	33	13	17	3	29	92	112			
NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.										
Wednesday's Games										
Florida 3, Los Angeles 2										
Utah 4, Detroit 1										
St. Louis 1, Winnipeg 0										
Carolina 4, Nashville 1										
New Jersey 2, Vegas 1, SO										
Thursday's Games										
Washington 4, Toronto 0										
Ottawa 4, Pittsburgh 0										
Montreal 4, Chicago 1										
Edmonton 3, Boston 1										
Minnesota 5, Columbus 2										
Los Angeles 2, Tampa Bay 1										
Buffalo 5, Philadelphia 3										
N.Y. Rangers 2, St. Louis 1, OT										
Calgary 4, Seattle 2										
Dallas at San Jose, late										
Friday's Games										
Carolina at Florida, 7 p.m.										
Vancouver at N.Y. Islanders, 7 p.m.										
New Jersey at Utah, 9 p.m.										
Winnipeg at Colorado, 9 p.m.										
Dallas at Anaheim, 10 p.m.										
Saturday's Games										
Detroit at Washington, 12:30 p.m.										
Philadelphia at N.Y. Rangers, 12:30 p.m.										
Chicago at Ottawa, 3 p.m.										
Edmonton at Minnesota, 3 p.m.										
St. Louis at Buffalo, 5 p.m.										
St. Louis at Florida, 6 p.m.										
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.										
Pittsburgh at Montreal, 7 p.m.										
Toronto at Nashville, 7 p.m.										
Vancouver at Boston, 7 p.m.										
Columbus at Anaheim, 10 p.m.										
Seattle at San Jose, 10 p.m.										
Vegas at Calgary, 10 p.m.										
Sunday's Games										
Washington at Detroit, 1 p.m.										
Colorado at Minnesota, 6 p.m.										
Buffalo at New Jersey, 7 p.m.										
Montreal at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.										
N.Y. Rangers at Nashville, 7 p.m.										
Ottawa at Boston, 7 p.m.										
Toronto at Dallas, 7 p.m.										
Winnipeg at Utah, 7 p.m.										
Vegas at Edmonton, 8 p.m.										
PENGUINS SUMMARY										
Ottawa 4, Pittsburgh 0										
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	—	0					
Ottawa	1	2	1	—	4					
First Period—1, Ottawa, Tkachuk 3 (Stutzle, Batherson), 2:16 (pp). Penalties—Pittsburgh bench, served by Heinen (Tripping), 1:18; Matinpalo, OTT (Interference), 17:49.										
Second Period—2, Ottawa, Perron 5 (Batherson, Spence), 1:34, 3, Ottawa, Giroux 6 (Amadio, Greig), 4:50. Penalties—Giroux, OTT (Tripping), 8:11; Pittsburgh bench, served by Novak (Delay of Game), 11:21.										
Third Period—4, Ottawa, Tkachuk 4 (Matinpalo, Jensen), 13:55. Penalties—Mantha, PIT (Roughing), 19:06.										
Shots on Goal—Pittsburgh 8-4-11—23. Ottawa 7-12-7—26.										
Power-play opportunities—Pittsburgh 0 of 2; Ottawa 1 of 3.										
Goalies—Pittsburgh, Silovs 4-5-6 (26 shots-22 saves). Ottawa, Ullmark 13-8-4 (23-23).										
A—17,260 (18,572). T—2:25.										
Referees—Beaudry Halkidis, Marc Joannette, Linesmen—Jeremy Faucher, Brad Kovachik.										