



**OWN THE WAY YOU FEEL**

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There's a  
massage for  
that:

**DYSPHAGIA**

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# WHAT IS NEUROMUSCULAR THERAPY (NMT)

- Neuromuscular Therapy is a specialized form of manual therapy that works to relax areas of strain in muscles, also known as, trigger points. (TrPs)
- TrPs are small areas of contraction within the muscle. These areas are unable to receive blood, oxygen or nutrients needed for the muscle to relax or rebuild healthy tissue.
- TrPs are hypersensitive causing pain, numbness and/or tingling in the muscle or various parts of the body. This hypersensitivity is often referred to as, myofascial pain.
- TrPs can refer pain to another area. This phenomenon is a result of the nerves and fascia being trapped within the TrP and sending signals elsewhere.
- Benefits of NMT
  - Reduced or complete elimination of pain
  - Higher levels of flexibility and strength
  - Increased ease and efficiency of movement
  - Better posture
  - Balanced musculoskeletal and nervous systems
  - Improved blood circulation
  - Higher levels of energy and vitality

# The Role of Manual Therapy in Dysphagia Treatment

Swallowing is dependent on a person's ability to move their swallowing structures and muscles during the exercise. Decreased range of motion (ROM), stiffness, and increased scar tissue (fibrosis) in the neck can prevent the swallowing structures from firing appropriately.

The key to treating Dysphagia is to treat the underlining problems creating the dysfunction.

Myofascial release (MFR) and manual therapy (MT) have become increasingly recommended as part of Dysphagia rehabilitation.

A 2016 study found MT increased neck ROM while decreasing pain and Dysphagia. (Krisciunas et al)

In 2017 MT was researched in head and neck cancer patients (HNC). All patients showed an increase in neck ROM and functional gains in swallowing. (Lewin et al)

# What is fascia?

Fascia is connective tissue throughout the body. It surrounds muscles, organs, and nerves. Fascia can harden over time due to trauma (such as radiation), injury or postural imbalances.

MFR is a slow, sustained stretch to the myofascial complex. (myo- meaning muscle)

MFR works to break down fascial adhesions and restore the muscle to its optimal length. MT uses passive ROM to the joint and soft tissue mobilization to improve ROM. Together, MFR and MT decrease pain and improve overall function.

Muscles that cannot be targeted directly through MT, can be treated indirectly by stretching their attachment sites.

# What to look for when booking a MT:

- Clinical or Medical Certification (Ex: Neuromuscular Therapy, Oncology Massage, Myoskeletal Alignment)
- MFR or Fascial training
- Whiplash and/or TMJD massage training
- Stretching and Flexibility training
- Postural/Structural bodywork training

# Self Care: Stretching

\*\*Stretching can be dangerous and harmful if done incorrectly. Consult your PCP before starting a new stretching routine. \*\*

## General Rules for Safe Stretching

- Never stretch an injury or damaged soft tissue
- Warm-up prior to stretching
- Stretch gently and SLOWLY
- Never hold a stretch if it's painful
- Stretch only to the point of tension
- Breathe slowly and easily while stretching.
- Stretch daily for maximum results



[YouTube: What stretching actually does to your body](#)



# Self Care: Neck Stretches

**1.** Place left arm behind back. Bring right ear to right shoulder. For a deeper stretch, place your right arm on top of your head. Allow the weight of your arm to guide the stretch - DO NOT apply pressure. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT left side.

**2.** Place left arm behind back. Bring head to right armpit. For a deeper stretch, allow the weight of your arm/hand to guide stretch. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT left side.

**3.** Place your left arm behind your back. Bring your right ear to your right shoulder. Use the weight of your right arm to deepen the stretch. CAREFULLY and SLOWLY look up. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT left side.

**4.** Draw your chin downward towards your chest. Interlace your fingers and rest your hands on the back of your head, using the weight of your hands to deepen the stretch. DO NOT apply additional pressure. Hold for ~20 seconds

**5.** Begin by looking up towards the ceiling. Interlace your fingers and rest your hands on your forehead, allowing the weight of your hands to deepen the stretch. DO NOT apply pressure. Hold for ~20 seconds.

**6.** Stand with back against a wall, feet shoulder width apart. Draw chin downward. Use either hand to guide chin/head against the wall. Hold for 5 seconds. Rest. REPEAT 10x.



# Self Care: Chest Openers

Tight chest muscles can contribute to a more rounded shoulder and forward head posture. By stretching out our pectoralis muscles and opening our chests, our shoulders and neck will have an easier time staying in a more neutral postural position.

## In-Doorway Stretch

**1. POSITION ONE:** Standing in a doorway, place hands on either side of the doorframe at shoulder height. Step forward with your right leg, lean forward until you feel the stretch in your chest and under your collarbone. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT by stepping forward with left leg.

**2. POSITION TWO:** Standing in a doorway, place forearms on either side of the doorframe with elbows just below shoulder height. Step forward with your right leg, lean forward until you feel the stretch in your chest and under your collarbone. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT by stepping forward with left leg.

**3. POSITION THREE:** Standing in a doorway, extend arms all the way up either side of the doorframe - utilize top of doorframe if possible. Step forward with your right leg, lean forward until you feel the stretch in your chest and under your collarbone. Hold for ~20 seconds. REPEAT by stepping forward with left leg.

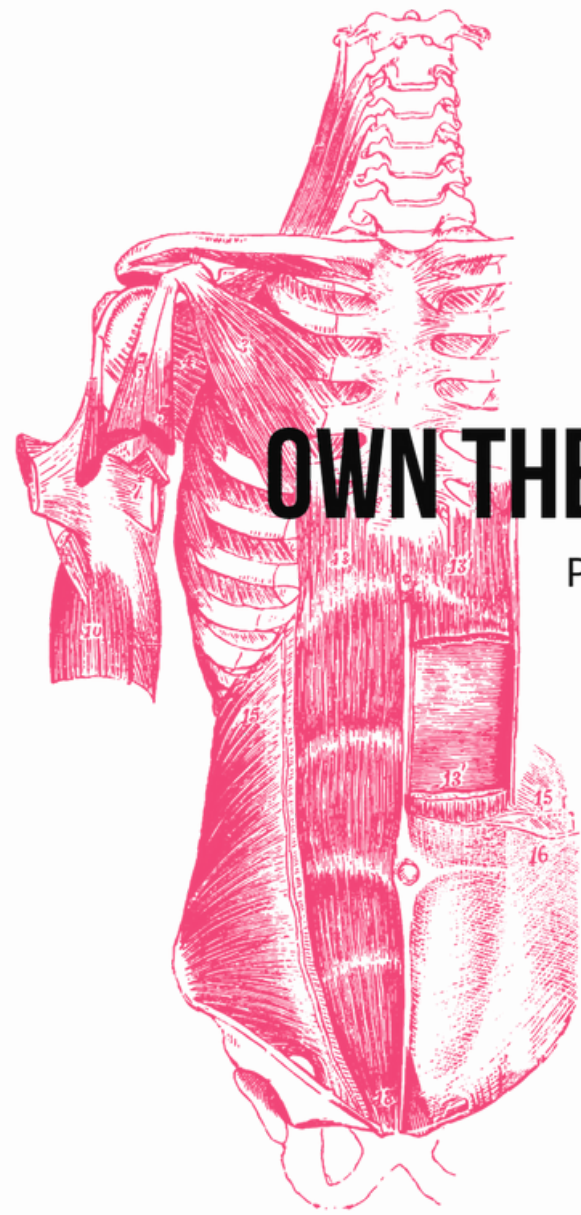


# In-Doorway Stretch





# QUESTIONS?



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