

GUA SHA

Gua sha is used to sedate a trigger point or relax a painful muscle spasm, capillary vasodilation restores oxygen and allows metabolic waste products to drain.

Gua sha interrupts vasoconstriction by mechanical stimulation of mast cells resulting in the activation of the axon reflex flare. The gua sha tool is stroked over the skin's surface. Mast cells are stimulated and degranulate. Granules containing histamine are released. Sensory nerves fire in response to histamine. As capillaries in the skin dilate it causes erythema (skin redness), blood flow increases and oxygen and nutrient flow to tissues improve.

In addition to chronic tendonopathy, traumatic injury may also result in prolonged vasospasm resulting in hypoxia and pain occurring long after the inflammatory period has ended.

In summary, diminished blood flow creates a hypoxic and acidic environment resulting in gradual tissue degeneration and pain.

Restoring aerobic metabolism is therefore the primary reason to use gua sha with regard to chronic soft tissue pain and degeneration.

HILTON'S LAW

Hilton's Law states that the same nerve trunks that innervate a joint also innervate the muscles that move that joint as well as the skin superficial to the muscles and joint. Gua sha improves circulation superficially and may also effect deeper structures. In theory, triggering reflexive vasodilation in the skin via mechanical stimulation may increase blood flow to the muscle, fascia and underlying joint via the common neural network that each of these tissues share.

The Ideal Patient

The ideal patient has localized, non-acute soft tissue pain that persists into the maturation stage of healing. Conditions to consider treating with gua sha ...

- Contracted tissue secondary to chronically poor posture
- Cumulative stress injuries including chronic tendon
- Immobilization and compression beneath a cast
- Ligament sprains where the joint is stable
- Muscle strains that remains stubbornly painful
- Myofascial pain/Tigger Points/Muscle spasm
- Nerve compression where postural habits and muscle imbalance results in entrapment between muscle groups
- Mature scar tissue resulting from trauma including crush, burn, blunt force, and surgical incision.