

Striking Vital Points of the Body

Striking vital points of the body. The human body has a multitude and nerve centers that can be used to advantage against an attacker.

Vital or striking points are those areas that a strike will have the most effect on. As such, it is in the best interest of those who study Karate to know where the vital striking points are in the human body. They are the ones by which a trained Karateka could incapacitate, cause unconsciousness or even the death of an opponent. There are approximately forty of these vital areas that are taught in karate. The following are some of the easiest to locate and hit.

Facial Areas:

Temple- Contrary to popular belief, the skull isn't thinner in this area: it is simply flatter. A strong blow to this area can cause disorientation or unconsciousness but it is due to referral shock to the brain because the strike, not to a weakness in the area. The possible reactions that an assailant may have to a good blow in this area are as stated, disorientation (punch drunk), unconsciousness, severe pain, and seizures and in extreme cases, death.

The best types of strikes for this area are the palm heel, hammer fist, back fist, elbow and knee.

Eyeball- Any strike to the eyes themselves can do lasting injury so be you do not use this target when "playing around" with someone. It should be used only when your life is in danger or when under the threat of serious bodily harm. Blindness, corneal scratching or tearing and other types of injuries are possible.

The best types of strikes for this area are finger jabs, clawing, stabbing and what some styles call the "chicken beak."

Base of nose- This is the area at the top of the nose where it meets the forehead between the eyes. It is also a subject of many ridiculous myths. Striking someone in this area does NOT cause the "bone in the nose" to be shoved up into the brain. As with other strikes and points on the head the results are usually due to the shock to the brain. The advantages to using a strike to this area can be the assailant drawing back, eyes watering and/or swelling, bloody nose (often a psychological plus), pain and disorientation. Moderate strength blows can cause all of the above as well as the separation of the cartilage and fracture to the nasal bone. Exceptionally strong blows can cause unconsciousness.

Base of Mandible (bottom jaw)- This is a fairly easy target to zero in on and can have several desirable results. They can be as simple as snapping the assailant's head back and putting him or her off balance, pain, clacking the jaws together and breaking the bone or teeth and it can even cause unconsciousness. This is a classic point for a boxer to strike for a knockout blow.

There are several strikes that can be effective to the mandible. Palm heel, uppercut and straight on punches, elbows or chicken wrist and just about any kick that comes from the floor up. Possible kicks would include sidekick, roundhouse, snap and lunge.

Hinge of jaw- There is a cluster of nerves that is located below each ear and at the hinge of the jaw. These can be located very easily by finding them first upon yourself. Use your thumb or middle and index fingers and GENTLY apply an increasing amount of pressure in the area. When you hit the nerve center you will know it!

With an assailant you can also use the fingers mentioned above. If they are trying to hug or hold you against your will or have you on the ground, you will use the fingers but with a sharp, jabbing motion. It won't cause lasting injury or break bones but it will often cause the assailant enough pain to if not release you, at least lighten his hold.

Under the jaw- Directly under and behind the point of the jaw is a "V" shaped area. It also has a cluster of nerves that can cause pain to an assailant. To find it on yourself, use your thumb to the inside area and your fingers on the outside surface of the jaw. Squeeze and push up against the bone. During an assault, this can have the same results as the nerve cluster above,

Front Of Torso:

Larynx (Adam's apple)- This is a very vulnerable area in anyone's throat. It is at the front of the throat and many of the possible strikes can cause serious injury. Movies like to show people reaching up and "ripping the throat" out of the bad guys but that is strictly Hollywood's wishful thinking. Strong blows can cause difficulty breathing, rupture of the trachea (windpipe), bleeding and even death.

Almost any solid strike will be effective in the area but a few suggestions are ridge hands, punches, four finger punches, chop, elbow and most any kick.

Base of throat- Like the larynx, this area is very delicate. One good thing about it though is you can practice carefully against yourself or a sparring partner. To locate this spot, find the hollow at the base of the throat. There is a sort of "V" notch where the collarbones come together. It is into this soft spot you want to apply pressure. GENTLY push into it with your fingers or thumb.

If some fool that really isn't trying to do you bodily harm is pestering you, simply pressing into the spot will get them away. For the others sharp finger jabs, one finger fists and spear hands can all be used.

Zyphoid process and solar plexus- The zyphoid process is the small tip that extends beyond the bottom of the breastbone into what is commonly called the breadbasket (solar plexus). It is also the bone that CPR instructors warn you about. If struck with any real pressure or force it can break off and cause injury to a person. Besides the pain, there is also the possibility of puncturing a lung. At the same time, straight in, powerful strikes can cause the assailant to have the wind knocked out of him, pain and even be stunned.

Possible strikes are most kicks, knees, palm heel strikes, forward punches and elbows.

Inguinal area- This is the highly sensitive area of the upper, inside thigh and halfway to the knee. There are a large number of nerves that make it an ideal area for strikes. Pinches, certain punches and several kicks can be used to cause pain and even numbing of the leg.

Want to see a man jump? Have him come up behind you and grab you in a bear hug. After he thinks he has you well in hand, move your hips slightly to one side and reach back with a hand and pinch an inch. Most will jump back and start rubbing the area. Even fairly light pinches can cause bruising.

For an assailant you can use forward punches, one finger punches, elbows, sidekicks, blade kicks and lunge kicks.

In all there are over fifty vital striking points and nerve centers that are taught in the martial arts. The ones listed above are some of those most commonly taught to beginning students.

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