About Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is an arthritis-related condition that causes muscle and soft tissue pain along with fatigue and tenderness in the body. While the underlying cause is not known, research shows that pain receptors in the body are over-stimulated. Those affected lack energy and can have trouble sleeping. These along with other signs can be severe enough to affect life at home and at work. Despite pain, there is no lasting damage to the muscles, joints or organs.

Who is affected?

Fibromyalgia affects 3 to 6% of Americans, with 3.7 million reporting having the condition.

- Women between the ages of 40 and 75 are more likely to be affected.
- Young women, men and children can be affected, but this is less likely.
- If you have a rheumatic disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus, you may at greater risk for this condition.

Signs

Signs of the disease vary from person to person and can come and go or be constant. Often people develop signs after an injury or infection.

- The two most common signs are widespread body pain and tender points. The pain is often described as tender or deep muscular aching, twitching, stabbing and shooting pain. Numbness, tingling and burning are often felt and cause more discomfort.

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- Heat, humidity, lack of sleep, physical and mental fatigue, too much or too little physical activity, and stress can increase signs of pain.
- Extreme fatigue and sleep problems often occur with the pain.
- Other signs include:
  - Bowel and bladder problems, such as diarrhea, constipation or bloating
  - Painful menstruation (periods)
  - Inflammation, itching or burning around vagina
  - Nasal congestion or runny nose
  - Restless leg syndrome (RLS)
  - Headaches or migraines
  - Jaw problems
  - Depression
  - Problems with memory and concentration
  - Heat/cold sensitive

**Treatment**

Treatment is often a combination of medicines, exercise and education.

- Medicines used to treat the condition:
  - Pregabalin (Lyrica) works to calm over-stimulated nerve cells that cause pain. It has been shown to reduce pain and improve sleep.
  - Duloxetine (Cymbalta) has been shown to improve the amount of serotonin (sero-tone-in) in the brain. Serotonin is important in how nerve cells transmit pain in the body.
  - Pramipexole (Mirapex) work to increase the brain chemical dopamine (dope-a –meen). Dopamine reduces the feeling of pain in the body.
  - Other medicines may be used to treat pain or signs of the condition.
- An exercise program that includes low impact aerobics, stretching, and low weight, high repetitions weight training. Start slowly and increase the level and intensity of exercise over time.
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
• Massage therapy
• Injections
• Coping skills, such as relaxation, visualization, meditation or biofeedback to control pain and responses to pain
• Acupuncture is the process of inserting needles into pressure points by a trained professional to provide pain relief and other signs of the condition
• Pain and stress management programs
• Joint protection
• There also are alternative therapies that have provided some people with relief. Talk to your doctor or therapist about options you might consider.

Nutrition
• Eat a healthy diet. Foods high in vitamins, minerals and other nutrients may help you to cope with the signs you have. Eat healthy foods such as:
  ▶ Plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Besides containing many vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, these foods are good sources of fiber than help lessen diarrhea and constipation.
  ▶ Low fat dairy and lean meats and poultry.
  ▶ Fish 2 to 3 times a week. Most fish are a good source of omega 3 fatty acids. This type of fat can help reduce inflammation in the body.
• Avoid caffeine for several hours before bedtime since it can make restful sleep more difficult.
• Avoid too many processed foods. Many people with fibromyalgia report food additives and some artificial sugar sweeteners make signs worse. Avoid nitrates, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and aspartame (Equal). Avoiding these foods may or may not make your signs better.
Living with Fibromyalgia

You will have a much better chance of having a rewarding lifestyle when you learn about the disease and take part in your care.

- Set aside time each day to relax. This will help decrease the stress that brings on signs of the disease.
- Establish a regular pattern of going to bed and waking up.
- Exercise each day to help reduce signs of pain and fatigue.
- Join a support group to help you know that you are not alone and to help you with coping strategies.
- Learn about your disease.

For More Information

Check out these websites to get more information to help you manage your disease and to share with family, friends and co-workers:

- The Arthritis Foundation at [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)
- The National Fibromyalgia Association at [http://www.fmaware.org](http://www.fmaware.org)

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).