

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a chronic illness that causes aching pain all over the body. You may feel pain when lightly touched. It affects all ethnic groups, up to 10 million Americans and up to 3% of people in the world. It is about eight times more common in women than in men, and is less common in children.

Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Problems with sleep
- Morning stiffness
- Stomach upset
- Depression
- Anxiety

Doctors think they know some causes of FM. Chemicals and links in the brain and the spinal cord help decrease the amount of pain we feel but may not work well in FM. It can start without a clear cause, or can be started by injuries, a severe illness, low blood pressure, and hormone levels that are not normal. It may also run in your family. Some people with FM have very flexible joints and ligaments. There is research going on to learn more about the causes.

FM is diagnosed by your health history and a careful exam. Right now there is no test for FM. Some people (even doctors) feel it is not a “real” condition. This is not true. We know it is real, and people can improve their symptoms with the right treatment.

Other diseases can look like FM, and your health care provider will make sure you do not have them before making the diagnosis of FM. Your provider will be looking for a

history of chronic pain that involves most of the body, along with fatigue, sleep issues, and tenderness.

You, your provider and physical therapist all play a part in the treatment. The most helpful will be working with a rehab team. If you have tight muscles, they will show you exercises to stretch them. You will learn ways to improve posture and decrease strain on muscles and joints. Studies suggest that light exercise, such as swimming or walking, can decrease pain and tenderness, improve fitness, and help sleep patterns. It can be painful at first. Start with as little as five minutes at a time, working towards a goal of twenty or thirty minutes, four or more times a week.

Coping with chronic pain can be hard. Your provider may suggest some visits to a health psychologist or have you take pain coping classes. They can help you in your daily life and help you learn new ways to cope with your pain, relieve stress and relax.

Medicines can help treat depression, improve sleep and relax muscles. Some pain medicines may help, but work best when combined with other tools. Opioid medicines (morphine and related drugs) do not work well for treating FM and are rarely used.

Heat, cold, massage, and acupuncture may give short-term relief, though they do not cure FM. Most people find the greatest help is to combine exercise, medicine, coping tools, and ways to relax.

The goal is to help you to live with your FM. Your treatment team will work with you to reach a higher level of function at work, home, and throughout your daily life. They will help you to have less pain if they can. There is no known cure so we cannot expect your symptoms to go away. By working with your team, you should be able to function better and enjoy your life.

You can find out more about fibromyalgia from:

National Fibromyalgia Association
1000 Bristol St. North Suite 17-247,
Newport Beach, CA 92660
www.fmaware.org

Fibromyalgia Network
PO Box 31750
Tucson, AZ 85751-1750
(520) 290-5508
www.fmnetnews.com

Fibromyalgia.com
www.fibromyalgia.com

National Fibromyalgia Partnership
140 Zinn Way
Linden, VA 22642-5609
Toll Free Phone: **866-725-4404**
www.fmpartnership.org

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©3/2018. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5641.