

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA

In the Clinic
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What Is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition that causes pain and tenderness all over the body for longer than 3 months. It can make you feel very tired, even after sleep, and can also cause a range of other symptoms. Research shows that people with fibromyalgia are extra-sensitive to pain signals and process them differently. Symptoms may begin after physical trauma, surgery, infection, or significant stress. Sometimes, there is no triggering event, and symptoms develop gradually over time.

Am I at Risk?

Risk factors include:

- Being female (twice the risk)
- Having a history of other inflammatory conditions, like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus
- Having a family member with fibromyalgia
- Insomnia or other sleep problems
- A history of depression and/or anxiety
- Not being physically active
- Excess body weight

What Are the Symptoms?

- Tenderness and pain all over the body
- Extreme tiredness
- Trouble sleeping
- Problems with concentration and memory
- Numbness or tingling in the hands and feet
- Other physical symptoms, such as headaches, abdominal pain, nausea, jaw pain, diarrhea, and dizziness

How Is It Diagnosed?

- A checklist of symptoms and their duration can identify fibromyalgia.
- Your doctor will perform a thorough history and physical examination to rule out other potential causes of your symptoms. The doctor will apply pressure to your muscles, joints, and tendons to see where there is tenderness.
- Because there is no test to diagnose fibromyalgia, laboratory and imaging tests should be kept to a minimum.
- When another condition is suspected, your doctor may order additional tests.

How Is It Treated?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic disease. The goals of treatment are to improve your function and quality of life and manage your most bothersome symptoms. Doctors and patients should work together to come up with a treatment plan. Exercise is essential for all patients with fibro-



myalgia because research shows it improves health-related quality of life, pain, function, sleep, depression, and anxiety. Low-impact exercise, such as walking, swimming, or yoga, is best. Usually, a combination of several treatments is needed, which may include:

- Getting enough sleep
- Managing stress
- Eating a balanced diet and losing weight if you have obesity or overweight
- Treating other conditions, such as sleep disorders or depression
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Acupuncture

In addition to these self-management strategies, your doctor may suggest medication to help with persistent symptoms. Several medications are available that may reduce pain and improve sleep. However, most have only modest benefits and may have side effects. Most opioid pain medications do not work for patients with fibromyalgia and have serious side effects. Talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks. Because fibromyalgia is a chronic condition, you should have regular visits with your doctor to check in about your treatment plan and how your symptoms are improving.

Questions for My Doctor

- How can I manage my symptoms and address flare-ups?
- Would you help me create a self-management plan?
- Do I need to take medicine?
- What are the side effects of the medicines?
- How can exercise improve my symptoms?
- How often do I need to follow up?
- Do I need to see other medical specialists?
- What alternative treatments should I try?

For More Information



MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/fibromyalgia.html>

National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association

<https://fibroandpain.org>