

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA

Fibromyalgia is a painful rheumatic condition characterized by diffuse or localized pain, tenderness and stiffness of skeletal muscles and associated connective tissue. Its causes are generally unknown. If you have it, you have pain. Your pain is often felt in the neck and shoulder muscles extending down the back. Pain can also be felt in the joints and muscles.

The characteristic physical feature is the demonstration of specific tender sites which are exquisitely more tender than adjacent areas. The sites of tenderness are remarkably constant in location. The diagnosis of fibromyalgia is made by recognizing the clinical manifestations...usually widespread pain in combination with 11 of 18 specified tender sites. The joint and muscle examination is normal, and there are no laboratory abnormalities.

Symptoms and Conditions

If you have fibromyalgia, it is likely that in addition to pain, you experience some degree of the symptoms described below.

Sleep Disturbance and Fatigue: About 80% of fibromyalgia sufferers wake up several times a night. In some cases, one may not wake up during the night but in the morning may wake up feeling exhausted. One reason for frequent waking is the subliminal seizures that kick you out of stage four sleep back to stage one sleep. This means you are not getting the quality of sleep needed to awaken feeling rested and refreshed. Lack of sleep quality causes daytime fatigue. Fatigue may also be caused by lack of oxygen, increased toxicity, infections or a malfunction of the mitochondria, all of which cause a disruption of the energy production mechanism in cells.

Short Term Memory Loss: Memory loss and forgetfulness are common symptoms for fibromyalgia sufferers. These symptoms are the result of low thyroid function and heart complications causing a decrease in blood flow and oxygen deficiency in the left lobe of the brain.

Emotional Liability, Depression, and Panic Attacks: Often, people with fibromyalgia experience emotional symptoms that include anxiety and fear, and they cry easily. Others experience depression. Each of these symptoms is related to a dysfunction of the hypothalamus, which is caused by fibromyalgia.

Low Thyroid Function: Nearly 85% of sufferers have this symptom, but only about 10% of the time will it show up on a typical thyroid test. If you are tested, request both a T3 and T4 test. Other symptoms associated with low thyroid include excessive hair loss, subnormal temperatures, and memory loss.

Gastrointestinal Problems: About 75% of sufferers experience symptoms that include gas, bloating, cramps, diarrhea, constipation, hiatal hernia, irritable bowel syndrome or Crohn's disease.

Allergies: Allergies often develop in fibromyalgia sufferers after three to five years. Some of the more common symptoms are swollen glands, chemical sensitivity, headaches, light sensitivity, dry eyes, and vertigo (dizziness).

Heart Problems: Fluttering or rapid heart beat, mitral valve prolapse, and low blood pressure can be caused by incorrect signals from the autonomic nervous system. These incorrect signals may cause the heart to under pump blood, which causes the body's feedback loop to overreact.

Candida Yeast Infections: Look at your tongue. If it has a white coating, you may have Candida. Women may also experience vaginal yeast infections. Candida has a number of additional symptoms that compound fibromyalgia sufferers. There are tests you can take if you are unsure if you have Candida.

Over-exertion: When they are feeling good, sufferers tend to overwork or over exercise, then feel worse for days afterward. In healthy people, the body shuts down when the anaerobic threshold is reached by sending pain signals to the muscles as lactic acid builds up. This warning does not occur for fibromyalgia sufferers. Instead, the body does not send this signal and ends up recirculating carbon dioxide. This is not healthy. It is important not to push yourself too hard when you begin recovering from fibromyalgia in order to prevent a set back.

Miscellaneous Symptoms: Tingling hands, ringing ears, cold toes or fingers or a metallic taste in the mouth are some additional symptoms experienced by fibromyalgia sufferers.

Traditional Chinese Medical Treatment Protocols for Fibromyalgia:

We assess each patient's health prior to treatment and a treatment plan is customized based on the combination of symptoms, level of pain, and underlying constitutional health. Often, the first three treatments focus on symptom relief. Subsequent treatments work on relieving side effects of western medicines, improving overall health and adjusting the constitutional condition. Treatments may include Acupuncture, Massage, Herbal Intervention, Food/Nutrition Therapy, Exercise and Self-massage.

Acupuncture: 6-10 treatments over a 5-10 week period...then maintenance treatments every 1-3 months. First series of 3 treatments are focused on pain and symptoms. Second series of 3 treatments are focused on balancing and adjusting individual constitutional conditions and treating underlying causes. Treatments vary for each individual.

Massage: Tui Na - Chinese therapeutic massage accompanies treatments with acupuncture. Self-help massage points are taught during treatment.

Herbal Supplements: Prescribed for individual diagnosis.

Nutrition/Lifestyle Recommendations: Fibromyalgia is a stress and lifestyle cause or related disease. To reduce stress and improve lifestyle, the following are general recommendations:

1. Begin walking twice daily - work up to 3 miles/day. It is very important to walk after evening meals.
2. Take on other stress reducing activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, swimming, and light hiking.
3. Avoid greasy, fatty, starchy foods.
4. Increase intake of lightly cooked greens and vegetables.
5. Increase anti-oxidants.
6. Drink warm or hot water throughout the day.

*Other recommendations may be prescribed based on individual diagnosis.