



FIBROMYALGIA
TREATMENT GROUP

Fibromyalgia Treatment

Myths Revealed



What Is Fibromyalgia?

Trying to describe fibromyalgia and what fibromyalgia is can be difficult, as the cause is by and large unknown. Fibromyalgia is a condition that is not fully understood and unfortunately little is known about why the condition exists.

People tend to rely a great deal on the knowledge and expertise of medical professionals when it comes to most health issues and concerns. Deplorably, medical professionals are still unclear about exactly what fibromyalgia is, and what precisely causes it. Medical professionals are also unclear as to how to treat fibromyalgia and to what extent fibromyalgia affects a person's daily life. This may seem like bleak news and in a lot of ways it is, however, some information has surfaced and is available about this mysterious condition that can serve as insight into this uncertain provision.

What The Experts Say

Further confusion about fibromyalgia has come to play in recent years due to the conflicting opinions of a number of health care providers and the opinions of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). Fibromyalgia has been recognized as a condition or disorder that can be diagnosed through the NIH and the ACR, and both institutions believe that fibromyalgia is a central nervous system disorder caused by a neurobiological abnormality which then produces a physiological and cognitive deficiency, which opposes most health care providers who do not believe that fibromyalgia is a disease. Many health care providers argue that in order for a condition to be recognized as a disease there must be a set or list of abnormalities physically examined through objective diagnostic testing.

To diagnose fibromyalgia, it is defined as a chronic condition that sets off widespread musculoskeletal pain and tenderness that has lasted for at least a period of 3 months.

Symptoms Of Fibromyalgia

With such little information known about fibromyalgia and with conflicts about whether fibromyalgia is a disease or a chronic condition; it can be difficult to diagnose. Fibromyalgia is largely characterized by one indication – pain. More than twelve million people have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia and each of them are forced to live with widespread musculoskeletal pain which often goes hand in hand with extreme moments of fatigue, memory difficulties and fluctuating mood swings and behaviors.

Fibromyalgia sufferers often find it hard to specify where exactly their pain is originating, as it is commonly felt body-wide. In order to be properly diagnosed with fibromyalgia, it is important to determine where the pain is deriving, as certain “tender spots” are the most apparent indicators of the condition. The tender spots tend to progress into a larger area, such as starting at the knee and spreading out to include the entire leg. The painful symptoms of fibromyalgia are most commonly felt in the soft tissue, muscles, tendons and joints. Soft tissue is located in several spots on the body such as: the elbow, neck, back, knees, shins, hips and shoulders. Soft tissue subsists in eighteen different places on the body. Consider how many areas of the body are surrounded by soft tissue to fully realize just how painful and uncomfortable living with fibromyalgia is. The pain is often felt more severely at night and the individual suffering from fibromyalgia frequently struggles to get to sleep. When finally able to get to sleep the night is regularly interrupted from the pain and the patient commonly wakes up stiff, uncomfortable and exhausted the next day. The pain or feelings that correspond with fibromyalgia have been described as a:

- Deep Ache
- Shooting Pain
- Burning Pain
- Painful Joints
- Numbness And Tingling in the hands and feet

These painful sensations are felt in areas of the body where soft tissue exists. The following is merely a few of the places where soft tissue predominates and where fibromyalgia pain is commonly felt. These are referred to as tender spots; the pain often spreads to even larger areas.

- Knees
- Buttocks
- Shoulders
- Hips
- Chest
- Neck
- Rib Cage
- Thighs

Fibromyalgia patients struggle on a daily basis with symptoms such as muscle spasms, muscle weakness, nerve pain, twitching and migraine headaches. Fibromyalgia correlates with other life complications that have been known to leave serious and even permanent effects on the body. Patients are commonly prone to anxiety and panic attacks, severe migraine headaches, a reduced ability to exercise, memory and concentration problems, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Diagnosing fibromyalgia is beneficial to the patient on many levels, mainly for the relief that can come with treating fibromyalgia once a correct diagnosis has been made. Fibromyalgia's symptoms are similar to Lupus as well as various forms of arthritis and taking the steps needed to diagnosis fibromyalgia can help speed up the treatment process.

Diagnosing Fibromyalgia

There is an immense amount of physical and emotional affects that fibromyalgia can have on an individual; so if you are have noticed changes in your physical and emotional state of being, it might be wise to speak to a medical professional about what type of testing is available for fibromyalgia. It is beneficial to stay calm and formulate a plan.

It might be overwhelming trying to organize and get a handle on chronic body wide pain but it can be done by taking a few simple steps.

- The **first step** is to call and schedule an appointment with your medical professional about testing for fibromyalgia.
- The **second step** would be to undergo a series of blood test and urine analysis. Blood and urine tests are usually

normal; however, tests may be done to rule out other conditions that may have similar symptoms.

- The **third step** is to record notes and possibly make a journal of the duration of your chronic pain. In order for you to be diagnosed with fibromyalgia you must be experiencing pain at least 11 out of 18 tender spots for at least three months. Tender Spot locations would include:
 - Arms
 - Buttocks
 - Chest
 - Knees
 - Neck
 - Rib Cage
 - Shoulders
 - Thighs
- If your primary physician is still unsure of whether or not you are suffering from fibromyalgia he or she might perform a tender point test.

Tender Point Test

During this process, a doctor applies firm pressure to each of the 18 tender points along with control points. Tender points are located on both sides of the body and both above and below the waist. The tender points are concentrated in the neck area. With four tender points on the front and six tender points on the back making up a total of 10 in one general area. Other tender points are found close to, but not on, the joints. There are tender points near each elbow, near each knee and four are located near the pelvis and hips.

What are Tender Points?

Tender points are small areas just under the surface of the skin. These points hurt when even light pressure is applied. The doctor will watch for the patient to flinch or pull back when pressure is applied. Tender points are about the size of a penny. They are much more sensitive than the areas

surrounding them.

How are Tender Points Tested?

Doctors test all of the tender points along with other points, known as control points, and study the patient's reaction. The control points are designed to make sure that the patient does not react to those as well. The doctor can use his hand or a doximeter/dolorimeter. The instrument can greatly assist in providing the correct amount of pressure. Testing based upon the tender points has been deemed unreliable in the past, due to the constantly changing pain of fibromyalgia. At times, sufferers may not have 11 of the 18 tender points reacting. They also may not experience 3 consistent months of widespread body pain. There is also concern for how much pressure is needed to determine the sensitivity of the pressure points. With all that can possibly be wrong with the tender points test, doctors are trying out a new way to diagnose fibromyalgia.

A New Way to Diagnose

Since fibromyalgia has a diagnosis that is based on the symptoms and with the limited amount of information known about the condition, there is no laboratory test or X-ray that can properly diagnose fibromyalgia. The newest in-office test takes a widespread pain index coupled with a symptom severity scale to help lead to more diagnoses and treatment options. The pain index is a 19 item checklist. The possible fibromyalgia sufferer marks the number of body parts experiencing pain during the last week. The symptom scale calculates the three most common complaints known to fibromyalgia patients; restless sleep, fatigue and cognitive issues, and rates them on a scale of zero to three.

The new test is actually effective in diagnosing fibromyalgia without any physical exam.

According to research, the tender points test was actually not ever designed to be a diagnostic test for fibromyalgia. It was designed more as a guideline to assist doctors in diagnosing.

Seemingly, it appears that this diagnostic test will be able to treat more potential fibromyalgia sufferers in learning what exactly is causing them so much pain and fatigue.

Tips to Dealing with Fibromyalgia in Everyday Life

Patients dealing with the symptoms and various life complications that are related to fibromyalgia often feel overwhelmed and unable to continue with their normal routines. Yet, it is vital for individuals suffering from fibromyalgia to continue with an active lifestyle as much as possible, because keeping somewhat active can actually aid in helping to lessen the symptoms. These tips for dealing with Fibromyalgia in everyday life can be very beneficial:

- **Save Your Energy** – Fatigue is the most common symptom, other than pain, that individuals who suffer from fibromyalgia complain about. It is important for adequate rest to be obtained whenever possible. If a sufferer's job or daily routine leaves them with little or no energy then it may be wise to consider making some changes. Work, commitments, projects, hobbies, as well as family and friends will affect the patient's energy levels.
- **Learn How To Adapt** – Daily movement will be affected by fibromyalgia because the once simple tasks of moving around, such as bending over or reaching for something, may lead to aches and pain. Adapting to a way of life while living with fibromyalgia is vital, individuals can do this by becoming creative and modifying the way they complete tasks in order to lessen the pain.
- **Make A Schedule** – Often individuals suffering from fibromyalgia feel completely overwhelmed with even the simplest tasks of daily life. This feeling can be made minimal or avoided by keeping a schedule for simple tasks such as household chores. Another idea is to create a schedule for tasks that can be completed on a daily, weekly, monthly, or annual basis. Doing a little bit at a time becomes much easier when it is planned out ahead of time.
- **Plan**– Being prepared for a bad day is a must for fibromyalgia sufferers. Some days will be worse than others when it comes to the pain and fatigue that must be dealt with. Stocking up on meals that are easy to prepare,

keeping disposable kitchen items, and being willing to ask for help when needed will be a good idea for those harder days.

- **Accept Change** – Willingness to accept change can make a huge difference in the life of an individual dealing with fibromyalgia. For instance, if turning doorknobs or water faucets becomes painful and difficult, consider switching to a different fixture to ease the task.

Life Complications

Fibromyalgia complicates everyday mobility and life. Fibromyalgia sufferers have difficulty sleeping, often due to aching muscles that prevent the individual from being able to relax enough to drift into sleep. The lack of sleep results in the patient waking up feeling extremely fatigued and restless even though the patient may have spent eight or more hours in his or her bed. Studies have shown that fibromyalgia patients tend to be at a higher risk for developing sleeping problems like restless leg syndrome or sleep apnea. Lack of sleep often accompanies and plays accomplice to several other common symptoms of fibromyalgia such as impaired speech, depression, anxiety, endometriosis and as previously talked about, migraine and tension headaches. Irritable Bowel Syndrome is also common among sufferers.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a disorder that causes pain to be felt in the abdominal area. IBS causes changes in bowel movements while producing painful and hard to manage symptoms. The symptoms of IBS can range from mild to severe and differ from patient to patient. The most common symptoms of IBS include:

- Abdominal Pain
- Feeling Of Being Full
- Gas
- Bloating

When a bowel movement is passed the pain may lessen, but soon after the discomfort will return. Individuals with IBS constantly struggle with

constipation, diarrhea and a loss of appetite.

- **Diarrhea** – Frequent, loose, watery stools. Those dealing with fibromyalgia often have the need for multiple bowel movements that can be difficult to control.
- **Constipation** – The opposite of diarrhea. An individual suffering from constipation struggles with having a bowel movement. Those suffering with constipation feel cramping when trying to pass a bowel movement and are only able to pass small amounts at a time.

Fibro Fog

Fibro fog is the term used when fibromyalgia disrupts an individual's ability to think clearly and is commonly associated with the lack of sleep caused by fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia can affect a person's ability to concentrate and commonly interrupts his or her short term memory. This type of memory loss affects many fibromyalgia sufferers and causes complications with the patient's work and personal life.

Migraine Headaches

Migraine headaches can be debilitating and add to the limitations that come with fibromyalgia. A reoccurring migraine headache is a neurological condition that can cause and create chemical changes in the body that produce further symptoms. As a migraine develops, the blood vessels in the brain begin to expand causing harmful chemicals to be released into the brain. This causes the brain's arteries to come under attack. The brain's arteries response and defense is to release the chemicals with symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, blurred vision and diarrhea.

Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition partial to women; this condition develops when the lining of the womb begins to grow in other areas of the body. During a monthly cycle a woman's ovaries produce hormones; the hormones then tell the cells lining the uterus to swell and thicken. During the monthly cycle the body removes the excess lining. Endometriosis occurs when the cells decide to implant or grow outside the uterus. Women that develop endometriosis

report feeling pain, irregular bleeding and often struggle with infertility. Endometriosis is a common condition and can be genetically transferable. Women with a family history of endometriosis may experience the following issues:

- Beginning the menstrual cycle at an early age
- Never Have Children
- Infertility
- Periods lasting at least 7 days
- Closed hymen

Symptoms of fibromyalgia are often painful and the women may endure the following complications as well.

- Lower abdominal pain before and during monthly cycle
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Painful periods
- Cramping before and during period
- Painful bowel movements

Some women experience no pain and only come to discover their condition when trying to conceive.

Fibromyalgia and Pregnancy

An expectant mother can expect more than just a baby when experiencing pregnancy causing fibromyalgia. The stresses and fears she feels during her pregnancy can turn into pain, and the first three months of a woman's pregnancy is her highest risk of developing this painful condition and the emotional and physiological changes that come with her new diagnosis.

Treating Fibromyalgia While Pregnant

Treating fibromyalgia during pregnancy must be done carefully, under a doctor's supervision, with caution not to upset or stress the expectant mother out further. Medications are not to be used during pregnancy; other forms of treatments are needed. Some physicians recommend a more natural and holistic approach to fibromyalgia treatment during pregnancy. Some approaches used include options such as yoga and meditation, massage therapy, and exercising.

Genetics and Hormones

Though the actual cause of fibromyalgia is unknown, some believe causes may be found in both genetics and hormones. Certain genes make people more susceptible to pain. Some studies suggest that it may be hereditary. Women are more susceptible to fibromyalgia. Estrogen is shown to reduce the threshold for pain and it is thought the reduction in the pain threshold may be why women are more likely to have fibromyalgia symptoms than men. It is also thought that men may be less likely to respond to the tender points test. A theory being that some men are too proud to admit that they are in pain. While men experience the symptoms of fibromyalgia, they typically are less intense. They may also experience fewer symptoms, however, the biggest complaint men have is less biological and more sociological. Some find it embarrassing to admit that they are in pain and tired all the time. The most helpful thing for men with fibromyalgia is to stay active and to not become overweight.

What is The Root?

While the cause of fibromyalgia is unknown, researchers do have some ideas about it. Everything from hormonal disturbances to stress has been thought to cause fibromyalgia. Doctors report that the cause of fibromyalgia is unknown because it acts differently for every sufferer. They cannot pinpoint an exact reason, but medical professionals do have several theories and hypothesis regarding the topic.

- Central Sensitization
- Physical or emotional trauma
- Sleep disturbances
- Infection
- Genetic predisposition
- Dopamine dysfunction (hypodopaminergia)
- Abnormal serotonin metabolism
- Deficient growth hormone (GH) secretion
- Psychological factors

Hormonal Disturbances

Hormonal imbalances have been deeply researched. Three prime hormones have been researched extensively: thyroid, insulin, progesterone.

- 1) Low thyroid hormone functioning is commonly found in fibromyalgia patients. After extensive research, it is common to find a deficiency in the thyroid of fibromyalgia sufferers.
- 2) Another hormonal disturbance considered to cause fibromyalgia is insulin. Many fibromyalgia sufferers have hypoglycemia. Hypoglycemia occurs when an overabundance of sugar is consumed and the body reacts by supplying copious amounts of insulin to compensate. When the body supplies too much insulin, it destroys most of the sugar in the blood resulting in low blood sugar; which results in the mind becoming fuzzy and the person becoming disoriented.
- 3) A third chemical imbalance has to do with progesterone. Both men and women's bodies produce progesterone. The highest concentration is in the brain because it is a necessity for nerve health and functioning. Progesterone works throughout the body from women's reproductive organs to peripheral nerves. Many fibromyalgia sufferers have taken a progesterone supplement and find their health issues improve. Regulating progesterone also helps to even out mood swings and lift spirits.

Stress and Fibromyalgia

Some researchers have focused their studies on the possibility that stress causes fibromyalgia. During periods of prolonged stress, the body is in a constant state of emergency which can cause the adrenal gland to be strained. When a stressful event is combined with an already stress prone body the gland can cause a surplus of estrogen for women and a compromise of testosterone production in men.

Treating Fibromyalgia

Though there is no known cure at this time for fibromyalgia, there are still options a fibromyalgia sufferer can do to help relieve the severe and limiting symptoms of fibromyalgia. When it comes to treating a mysterious condition such as fibromyalgia, selecting a treatment option can be complicated; so it is important that the fibromyalgia patient take the necessary time needed and the advice and counsel of a medical professional before settling on a treatment plan. A patient treating fibromyalgia will basically find themselves faced with two options:

- 1) Treatment through pharmaceutical means

- 3) Treatment through natural methods

Both treatment choices can help fibromyalgia patients find relief; however, there are differences between the two that can have a profound effect on the fibromyalgia patients overall health and wellbeing.

The Pharmaceutical Approach

Many fibromyalgia studies have found that certain prescription medications can help sufferers in their daily activities. Generally, fibromyalgia patients can take a preventative medication that will help reduce the amount of symptoms experienced. There are no prescription medications that are specifically designed to help with fibromyalgia symptoms, but because many studies have been done on prescription medication and fibromyalgia, doctors are able to use prescription medications as an off-label treatment. The prescription medications are used to bring pain under control, improve sleep, increase energy and help improve the mood of fibromyalgia sufferers. Four commonly used prescription medications include but are not limited to:

- 1) Anti-inflammatory medications**
- 2) Anti-depressant medications**
- 3) Anticonvulsants**
- 4) Muscle relaxant medications**

Anti-inflammatory medications

Anti-inflammatory medications are available both as prescriptions and

over-the-counter. These prescription medications can help reduce the pain that fibromyalgia patients experience. However, because of the side effects anti-inflammatory medications have on the lining of the stomach, they should only be taken as needed and when absolutely necessary. Ultram is an example of an anti-inflammatory medication used to treat fibromyalgia symptoms. Ultram is a narcotic-like pain prescription medication designed to help alleviate many kinds of moderate to severe pain. It is important to note that Ultram may be habit forming; take Ultram exactly as prescribed. Ultram is prescribed, and found in several different pill forms. Ultram can be taken either with or without food, but should be taken consistently the same way. Common side effects of Ultram should not become bothersome or persistent. Many people are able to take Ultram with little to no side effects, though it is important to speak to a doctor if any of the following side effects become bothersome or persistent.

Common side effects of Ultram include:

- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Dry Mouth
- Headache
- Increased Sweating
- Indigestion
- Mild Itching
- Nausea
- Trouble Sleeping
- Vomiting
- Weakness

The side effects of Ultram can range from minor inconveniences to life threatening. The following are side effects that require immediate medical attention if developed.

Severe side effects of Ultram include:

- Rash, hives or severe itching
- Difficulty breathing, slow or shallow breathing
- Itching
- Pain or tightness in the chest

- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips or tongue
- Unusual Hoarseness
- Agitation
- Confusion or disorientation
- Difficult or painful urination
- Excessive Sweating
- Fainting, dizziness or light-headedness
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Fever
- Hallucinations or problems with vision
- Loss of coordination, or vision problems
- Severe mood or mental changes, suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Red, blistered, swollen or peeling skin
- Seizures
- Severe dizziness or light-headedness
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Severe or persistent headache
- Tremors

Anticonvulsants

Anticonvulsants were originally designed to treat seizures but are now commonly used to help fibromyalgia patients and migraine sufferers. They are able to affect the chemicals in the brain that send pain signals across the nervous system which helps to reduce pain and facilitate sleep. Examples of anticonvulsants are Lyrica and Neurontin. **Lyrica** is a popular choice for doctors to prescribe. Lyrica is an anti-seizure medication originally designed to help patients who have epilepsy. However, after much research, Lyrica is now used to help treat fibromyalgia as an off-label use. While common side effects typically do not become bothersome or persistent, Lyrica is chemical in nature and can easily cause just as many side effects as any other medications.

Common side effects of Lyrica include:

- Blurred Vision
- Changes in sexual function
- Constipation
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness

- Dry Mouth
- Gas
- Headache
- Increased Appetite
- Lightheadedness
- Stomach Pain
- Trouble Concentrating
- Weight Gain

If you take Lyrica and begin to experience any of the following side effects, seek immediate medical help.

Severe side effects of Lyrica include:

- Rash, hives or itching
- Difficulty Breathing, shortness of breath or wheezing
- Tightness or pain in the chest
- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips or tongue
- Unusual hoarseness
- Burning, numbness or tingling of the hands, feet or skin
- Confusion or loss of coordination, trouble walking
- Fast or Irregular Heartbeat
- Fever, chills or persistent sore throat
- Inability to control urination
- Memory Loss
- Muscle aches, pain, tenderness or weakness (especially if it occurs with fever or general feeling of discomfort)
- New or unusual skin sores
- New or worsening mental state or mood changes (examples: anxiety, depression, restlessness, irritability, panic attacks, feeling "high," behavior changes, suicidal thoughts or attempts)
- New or worsening seizures
- Reddened, blistered, swollen or peeling skinNew or unusual skin sores
- Speaking problems
- Sudden unexplained weight gain
- Swelling of the hands, feet or ankles
- Tremor
- Trouble sleeping, unusual tiredness or weakness

- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Vision Changes

Anti-depressant medications

Two common anti-depressants often prescribed for fibromyalgia sufferers are Cymbalta and Paxil. These two medications often decrease pain, increase energy, decrease anxiety, help with alertness and improve depression. Cymbalta and Paxil are not typically used for fibromyalgia patients who have been clinically depressed. During the medication study, researchers followed patients for six months, results are irresolute on how well Cymbalta and Paxil will work for long term use.

Paxil belongs to a group of anti-depressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). Paxil is a common prescription medication that is given from the SSRI category. Common side effects of Paxil should not become persistent or bothersome. They should become manageable or go away shortly after beginning Paxil.

Common side effects of Paxil include:

- Anxiety or nervousness
- Blurred Vision or dizziness
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Decreased sexual desire or ability
- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Gas
- Increased Sweating
- Increased Urination
- Loss of Appetite
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Numbness or tingling of the skin
- Trouble Sleeping and yawning
- Weakness

After several weeks and months of being on Paxil, if any of the following complications are experienced, seek medical attention.

Severe side effects of Paxil include:

- Rash, hives, itching
- Difficulty Breathing
- Tightness or pain in the chest
- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips or tongue
- Bizarre Behavior, confusion or hallucinations
- Black or Bloody Stools
- Decreased Concentration or coordination
- Exaggerated Reflexes
- Fainting
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Fever, chills or sore throat
- Memory Loss
- New or worsening mental or mood changes (examples: agitation, panic attacks, aggressiveness, impulsiveness, irritability, hostility, exaggerated feeling of well-being, restlessness or inability to sit still)
- Persistent or severe ringing in the ears
- Persistent, painful erection
- Red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin
- Seizures
- Severe or persistent anxiety or trouble sleeping
- Severe or persistent headache or dizziness
- Significant weight loss
- Stomach pain
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Tremor
- Unusual bone pain or unexplained swelling
- Tenderness or bruising
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Unusual weakness
- Vision changes
- Worsening of depression

Cymbalta is in a drug group of anti-depressants. While doctors and manufacturers are uncertain why Cymbalta helps with fibromyalgia symptoms; it could be tied to the fact that many fibromyalgia sufferers also suffer from depression. Common side effects should not become persistent or bothersome. If they do, then a patient should immediately contact their

doctor.

Common side effects of Cymbalta include:

- Constipation or diarrhea
- Decreased sexual desire or ability
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness or weakness
- Dry Mouth or sore throat
- Headache
- Increased Sweating
- Loss of Appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Tiredness or trouble sleeping

Severe side effects of Cymbalta can become life threatening. If a fibromyalgia patient begins to suffer from any of these severe side effects, he or she should immediately seek the help of a healthcare professional.

Severe side effects of Cymbalta include:

- Rash, hives or itching
- Difficulty Breathing
- Tightness in the chest
- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips or tongue
- Unusual hoarseness
- Bizarre Behavior, confusion, hallucinations
- Bloody or black, tarry stools, dark urine, or pale stools
- Blurred vision
- Decreased concentration or coordination
- Excessive Sweating
- Fainting
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Fever or chills
- Memory Loss
- Mouth sores or ulcers
- New or worsening mental or mood changes (examples: aggressiveness, agitation, anxiety, depression, hostility, impulsiveness, irritability, panic attacks and restlessness)
- Red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin

- Ringing in the ears
- Seizures or tremors
- Severe or persistent dizziness or headache
- Severe or persistent nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, stomach pain
- Severe or persistent tiredness or weakness, or trouble sleeping, sluggishness
- Stiff Muscles
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Trouble urinating or change in the amount of urine produced
- Usual bruising or bleeding
- Unusual weakness
- Vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes

Muscle relaxant medications

Patients with fibromyalgia pain are sometimes prescribed muscle relaxants. The medicine does not appear to relax muscles but does reduce muscle pain. These medications are typically taken in the evening because they cause drowsiness. Lunesta is a medication that can help relax the muscles.

Lunesta is in a group of prescription medications called sedatives or hypnotics. It helps to rebalance chemicals in the brain that cause issues sleeping. Lunesta is a sleep medication designed to help the body relax. It is important to note that some patients who have taken Lunesta have driven, eaten, made phone calls and have no memory of the events. This can be dangerous. Common side effects of Lunesta should not become bothersome or persistent but please keep in contact with a doctor while taking Lunesta so they can track the body's response to the prescription medication.

Common side effects of Lunesta include:

- Anxiety, nervousness
- Decrease in sexual desire
- Difficulty with coordination
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Drowsiness
- Dry Mouth
- Headache

- Indigestion, nausea
- Unpleasant Taste
- Vomiting

Working with a medical professional can help decrease the chances of the following severe complications.

Severe side effects of Lunesta include:

- Rash, hives, itching
- Difficulty breathing
- Tightness or pain in the chest
- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips or tongue
- Unusual hoarseness
- Aggressive behavior
- Breast growth
- Confusion or hallucinations
- Depression
- Memory Problems (example: amnesia)
- Mental or mood changes, severe mood swings, suicidal thoughts
- Painful menstrual periods
- Seizures
- Swelling of hands or feet
- Symptoms of infection (examples: fever, sore throat, sinus or chest congestion)
- Unusual or disturbing thoughts

Natural Fibromyalgia Treatment Options

Frequently prescription medications are the first line of defense when it comes to fibromyalgia treatment, but in many cases lifestyle changes and alternative treatments can provide much more relief to the musculoskeletal pain and tenderness, and at a lower cost. When patients suffering from fibromyalgia are able to take into account the importance of self-care, treatment for finding relief is much more possible.

- **Stress Reduction** –Stress is a factor frequently known

to increase fibromyalgia symptoms. This is why it is so important for individuals seeking fibromyalgia treatment to develop a way to avoid stress or find proper ways to deal with stress when it does occur.

- **Sleep** – Getting enough rest is vital to those with fibromyalgia. This is often a difficult task as the pain that is associated with fibromyalgia can affect a person’s sleep patterns. Studies have shown that proper sleep patterns, such as getting up and going to bed at the same time on a daily basis, can be beneficial to those seeking relief.
- **Exercise** – Fibromyalgia sufferers have reported the use of exercise and physical therapy help to lessen their symptoms. It is important that exercise is started gradually and completed regularly to find consistent relief; but stretching, good posture, and relaxation exercises have been proven to aid in fibromyalgia reprieve.
- **Best exercises for fibromyalgia sufferers**
 - **Low impact exercises**, start slow!
 - **Walking** is one of the best and easiest exercises. It is suggested to start with just five minutes of walking. After that, they should add a minute each day until they are up to walking for about an hour. It is also suggested to try to walk an hour at least three to four times each week. Once walking for an hour becomes easier, it is suggested to alternate between walking and light jogging.
 - **Bicycling** - it is safest to use a stationary bike to reduce any risk of falling
 - **Swimming** is also a low impact exercise. It is suggested to start treading water for a few minutes, and then build up from there. After treading water becomes easier, the fibromyalgia sufferer should move up to swimming laps for up to 30 minutes. Water aerobics are also a good idea for fibromyalgia sufferers.
 - **Strength** training is typically added to an existing

exercise program. Fibromyalgia sufferers should use light weights and be very careful because using too much weight or performing improper movements can cause injury or additional soreness.

- **Limit Your Exercise Time**

- It is important to start slow. Five minutes is a good start and it is important to remember that some pain is expected, but sharp pain or exhaustion means an individual may be doing too much or exercising for too long. Fibromyalgia sufferers should seek medical advice before beginning any exercise regimen.

- **Health** – Eating a healthy, well balanced diet and limiting caffeine intake can help to decrease the pain associated with fibromyalgia.

- **Diet and Nutrition**

- We know that eating a balanced diet of the right kind of whole foods helps with the body's ability to function better, and it is especially important for people who suffer with fibromyalgia to have a well-balanced diet.
 - o Patients with fibromyalgia should consume an excess of raw fruits and vegetables because these food items contain crucial enzymes that help aid in the digestion process. Raw fruits and vegetables are also loaded with antioxidants that help boost a person's immune system. Researchers have found that Vitamin K helps calcium deposit into the bones which makes the bones denser. Vitamin K can be found in the following food items:
 - Broccoli
 - Spinach
 - Dark leafy greens
 - o Some fibromyalgia patients have food allergies or

sensitivities to certain foods causing inflammation and irritation. Common food sensitivities among fibromyalgia sufferers are found in the following:

- Wheat
- Dairy
- Corn

- **Foods To Avoid**

- o Research has also shown that there are some food groups that should be avoided in order to better improve your symptoms, pain and overall life while living with fibromyalgia. These groups are:

- Aspartame
 - Simple carbohydrates, sugar and high fructose
 - Yeast and Gluten
 - Caffeine
 - Nightshade plants such as bell peppers, tomatoes, cherries and potatoes
 - Dairy products
 - Food additives such as MSG

- If you suffer with fibromyalgia and find that you have some food sensitivities or allergies, keep a journal containing the foods that you have consumed and note whether or not you have had any reactions. By doing this, you can discover that certain foods or food groups can trigger pain or allergies. If you make any discoveries, you can eliminate those certain foods and hopefully experience fewer symptoms and less pain.

Natural Therapeutic Methods

Certain therapies for pain and stress management can also be highly beneficial to those seeking to find a natural method of treatment for fibromyalgia. The following therapeutic methods have been shown to assist in relief for fibromyalgia patients:

- Acupuncture

- Massage therapy
- Yoga
- Tai Chi

Acupuncture

Acupuncture as a therapy originated as traditional Chinese medicine. Acupuncture is based on the premise that there are patents of energy that flow through the body and the alignments of these energies are essential to total body health. Acupuncture uses stimulation of specific acu-points on the skin by inserting needles that range in length from 1 cm to 10 cm. A typical treatment involves the use of 5 to 15 needles and the generally the acu-points vary during each treatment session.

Acupuncture aims to treat the specific symptoms unique to each fibromyalgia sufferer. Studies have proven that acupuncture can be beneficial to providing relief in fibromyalgia sufferers in regards to pain and relaxation which aids in lessening fatigue. Many individuals who have used Acupuncture as a course of treatment for Fibromyalgia symptoms reported having an overall decrease in pain after only one session, and most reported an ability to fall asleep naturally and sleep deeper and longer on the nights that followed an acupuncture session. Acupuncture has been shown to increase relaxation, and aid in immunity and better overall health.

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy can aid in lessening symptoms for fibromyalgia patients, research has proven that the use of massage therapy as a form of fibromyalgia treatment can help sufferers experience deeper levels of sleep and lessen levels of pain and fatigue. Massage therapy accomplishes this by using different forms of massage to help oxygenate the body as a whole which can decrease the severity of symptoms that a fibromyalgia sufferer experiences. Massage therapy helps aid in relief from their symptoms specifically by reducing swelling, pain and stiffness in the joints and muscles, decreasing anxiety and stress, increasing blood circulation and flexibility, and increasing the range of motion. It is important to note that massage therapy, especially when performed on a fibromyalgia patient, should be administered by a trained professional, preferably someone who is accustomed to working with patients who suffer from fibromyalgia. There are many options of

massage therapy to consider, including Swedish massage, positional release techniques, myofascial release, reflexology, passive stretching, energy healing cranial-sacral therapy, proprioceptor neuromuscular facilitation, and neuromuscular therapy.

Other Options for Fibromyalgia Treatment

- Chiropractic care
- Aromatherapy
- Biofeedback
- Essential oils
- Herbal supplements

Chiropractic Care

Chiropractic care usually falls within the category of alternative treatment; however it is becoming much more widely accepted by both the mainstream medical community as well as an acceptable form of fibromyalgia treatment. The main resolve behind the concept of chiropractic care is to aid in lessening symptoms of pain and other issues by correcting any imbalances in the skeletal configuration. The forms of adjustment of the skeletal structure are made through techniques such as stretches, adjustments, as well as manipulations where the imbalance can be restored and results in lessening of symptoms. Chiropractic care used for fibromyalgia treatment has become increasingly more popular. Many Fibromyalgia sufferers experience ongoing backaches, foot pain, or leg cramps, and chiropractic care can aid in lessening those symptoms. Fibromyalgia sufferers often are found to comprise a condition referred to as upper cervical spinal stenosis. This condition causes the coverings of the spine to become compressed, causing severe pain. Upper cervical spinal stenosis can be relieved through chiropractic care, using both adjustments as well as manipulations, which aid in relieving the compression on the spine.

Aromatherapy

How oils can help individuals with fibromyalgia

- Oils can have an obvious effect on one's psychological and emotional state. Oils have the ability to cross the blood-brain barrier, therefore positively affecting the mind. Oils have the

potential to:

- o Relieve anxiety
 - o Improve sleep
 - o Increase concentration
 - o Relieve depression.
- Oils have been reported to relieve many of the neuropsychiatric and emotional problems associated to this condition.

Aromatherapy is becoming more and more popular because of the effects that aromatherapy appears to have on pain sensation and mood. Aromatherapy is administered in different ways, which can include inhalation (direct as well as indirect, and dilution), massage oils, water sprays, bath salts, lotions and creams. Aromatherapy has a wide variety of oils to help specified needs, concerns or issues. Not every fibromyalgia sufferer endures the same types of pain; therefore specified treatment is needed to bring about the desired amount of relief.

- **Pain Relief:** spike lavender, sweet marjoram, lavender, Roman and German chamomile, clary sage, lemongrass, helichrysum, and peppermint Side note: Spike lavender along with peppermint and helichrysum together has anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Stress / Anxiety:** frankincense, sweet orange, bergamot, grapefruit, ylang ylang, sandalwood, neroli, mandarin, lavender, rose geranium, tangerine, jasmine
- **Sleep Improvement:** lavender, neroli, jasmine, marjoram, Roman chamomile
- **Headaches:** peppermint, marjoram, Roman chamomile, lavender (a peppermint stick that you can buy at a drug store also works exceptionally well when rubbed on your temples)
- **Increased circulation:** rosemary, ginger, black pepper, peppermint, lemongrass, rose geranium
- **Increase energy:** lemon, grapefruit, geranium
- **Relaxation:** lavender, chamomile, jasmine
To ease sore joints and muscles: black pepper, eucalyptus, peppermint, juniper

Essential Oils

Essential oils can be used topically for things such as:

- A massage,
- During a bath
- Diffused into the air.

Studies have shown that there are several oils that are helpful to fibromyalgia sufferers such as lavender, peppermint, frankincense and roman chamomile.

For therapeutic massage, it is suggested to use 10 to 12 drops of essential oils in one ounce of carrier oil. Carrier oil can be a cold-pressed nut, seed or vegetable oil. The use of fractionated coconut oil is strongly suggested since it is clear, light and odorless. This oil also does not oxidize, so there is total skin penetration.

Lavender is suggested as a part of a mixture to help with pain, stress, sleep and headaches. For pain relief, many sufferers suggest combining lavender with peppermint oil and helichrysum oil. This combination is said to create an anti-inflammatory effect. Lavender alone is said to help for stress and anxiety relief. This stress relief is also said to help relax the fibromyalgia sufferer to ease into sleep. Other helpful oils for stress relief and peaceful sleep include marjoram, neroli and jasmine. For some fibromyalgia sufferers, a combination of these oils may be most useful.

The intense and painful headaches that come with the condition of fibromyalgia can sometimes be treated with peppermint or lavender oil. Not all oils are created the same. It is best to do some research prior to purchasing any essential oils. It is also important to ensure that pure essential oils are being purchased.

Biofeedback

The stressors of fibromyalgia pain can be eased using biofeedback. Biofeedback is a mind and body relaxation technique that helps fibromyalgia sufferers to learn about their body's natural internal process to control relaxation. Biofeedback uses an electronic device to measure stress-related responses in the body. After extensive research biofeedback is able to help

relieve many types of chronic pain, including fibromyalgia. The electronic device is connected so that it can inform the fibromyalgia patient and the therapist when the patient is physically relaxing his or her body. Sensors are able to report muscle tension, heart rate, breathing patterns, the amount of sweat produced and body temperature. The design of biofeedback is to first teach the body how to react to stressors in a controlled environment. Once the fibromyalgia patient is able to react properly inside of a controlled environment, he or she should be able to start reacting properly in daily life. There are many different types of biofeedback devices: Electromyograph, Peripheral Skin Temperature, and Electroderm Response.

EMG (Electromyograph)

The most common biofeedback therapy is the EMG. Because the EMG is used to help correct muscle pain and stiffness it can be the most useful for fibromyalgia patients. The device that is used is called an electromyograph which is able to measure the electricity given off by the patient's muscles.

PST (Peripheral Skin Temperature)

A less common form of biofeedback is the PST. The PST is able to measure electrical impulses given off by the flow of a patient's blood. By doing so, it is able to give information about skin temperature.

EDR (Electroderm Response)

An EDR is considered sweating biofeedback. It is able to monitor electricity produced by a patient's sweating reflexes. This form is usually used to help with anxiety and depression. While some therapists only use one device and type of biofeedback devices, it is most common for them to use a combination.

Herbal Supplements

The most commonly used type of treatment for fibromyalgia is the use of prescription medications. The prescription medications used are analgesics, antidepressants, as well as anti-seizure drugs. However, many of these prescription medications have negative side effects; so while a patient may begin to find some relief in regards to their pain, they are bombarded by other problems and issues that are sourced from the prescription medications they are taking for their pain relief. There are alternatives to prescription medications that have proven very successful for the relief of those who suffer from fibromyalgia. The most commonly used natural

supplements for fibromyalgia treatment are:

Vitamin D – Research has shown that Vitamin D can help with the symptoms of fibromyalgia. Some studies show that individuals who suffer from fibromyalgia have lower levels of Vitamin D, thus increasing Vitamin D can help to lessen the symptoms caused by fibromyalgia.

Fish Oil – Fish oil is full of omega-3 fatty acids, known to be an anti-inflammatory which makes it an excellent source for reducing the pain associated with Fibromyalgia.

SAMe – This particular supplement is a synthetic form of a compound which the body naturally produces. It is needed for immune function and plays a key role in the forming of cartilage and DNA. Research has shown that SAMe can lessen the symptoms of chronic pain as well as boost an individual's spirits (good for those also experiencing depression).

Capsaicin – When Capsaicin is used on the tender points of a person who suffers from fibromyalgia a decrease in pain has been notated. Capsaicin can be found in spicy foods, or taken as a supplement.

Ribose – Fibromyalgia often causes tight muscles. Ribose helps to ease this pain because Ribose can help to loosen those muscles and help to improve the movement.

Magnesium – Magnesium can aid in relief from fibromyalgia because when taken as an additional supplement it can help to reduce the muscle spasms, weakness, and back pain that are commonly associated with fibromyalgia.

B- Complex Vitamins – All of the B- Complex vitamins (Folic Acid, Riboflavin, and Thiamine) can help to lessen inflammation that often causes the painful symptoms, these vitamins can also help to maintain muscle tone.

5-HTP – Research has shown that when individuals suffering from fibromyalgia are given 5-HTP as a treatment, individuals reported a significant decrease in their tender points as well as the amount of pain they were experiencing on a daily basis. Other benefits noted with the use of 5-HTP were improvements in sleep, morning stiffness, anxiety, as well as fatigue.

Brown Seaweed Extract – Research is proving that Brown Seaweed extract (a supplement) is proving highly successful in the fight against

chronic pain. Studies have shown that taking Brown Seaweed extract can reduce joint pain and stiffness by as much as 52% and individuals notice these benefits within only one week of beginning treatment.

What Now?

It can be very overwhelming living with and trying to cope with chronic fibromyalgia. While trying to sift through and decide on a treatment option, it is important that you surround yourself with a strong support group that will commit to encourage and help you as you work through the various treatment plans and options. The important thing to keep in mind is that the treatment process is a journey and it might take a few attempts before you get it right, so stay encouraged and you will find the right option for you.