

SpineFAQs

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a pain disorder that is not well understood. It involves diffuse painful areas of the soft tissues of the body. It can lead to long-term (chronic) pain, which can affect your activities of daily living. There is no known cure for fibromyalgia.

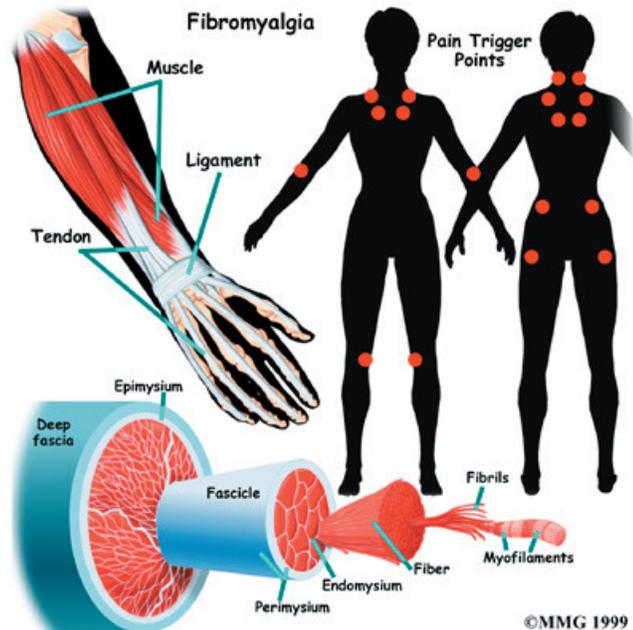
What causes Fibromyalgia?

We are not exactly sure. Some believe it is an autoimmune disorder. Some believe that it is actually a neurological disorder. It may be associated with other disorders such as arthritis, or it may be completely separate.

What are the symptoms of Fibromyalgia?

Pain is the most common symptom. While patients can have pain anywhere, it is most often seen in the tissues around or near joints.

Stiffness may also be seen. Fatigue and tiredness are common as is poor sleep. Occasionally people will complain of a sensation of numbness and tingling, or even swelling of the hands or feet. Irritable bowel syndrome and diarrhea are seen. Severe PMS in women may occur. Depression is commonly seen with Fibromyalgia. The vast majority of people diagnosed with Fibromyalgia are middle aged women.



How is Fibromyalgia diagnosed?

There is no blood test or scan that can make the diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. Your description of how and where your pain develops, and a clinical examination are the primary tools used to make the diagnosis. Your MD may do some testing (such as blood work, or electrical testing) to rule out

other causes of such pain such as arthritis, peripheral neuropathy, or muscle disorders. Occasionally a sleep study is done. On examination, your doctor may document areas of specific muscular tenderness. These are particularly located in the upper back and neck, in the hips and lower back.

How is Fibromyalgia treated?

Treatment is usually life-long management of the symptoms. About 25% of people treated for Fibromyalgia are in remission at two years after diagnosis. Most others are moderately controlled. Gentle strength and resistance training can be helpful. Anti-depressant medications, medications to help with sleep, exercise, stretching, acupuncture, and steroid injections (called trigger point injections) into the painful muscles may be tried. Recently, and medication called Lyrica has been approved to help with some of the symptoms of Fibromyalgia. Psychological counseling to help patients deal with their pain is also helpful.

Resources for help and information

American College of Rheumatology

http://www.rheumatology.org/public/factsheets/fibromya_new.asp?

The National Fibromyalgia Association

<http://www.fmaware.org/site/PageServer>

The Arthritis Foundation

<http://ww2.arthritis.org/conditions/DiseaseCenter/Fibromyalgia/fibromyalgia.asp>