

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia, many Americans have heard the word or know someone that has been diagnosed with the condition, but most are not clear about what it is. The diagnosis has only been around for a little over ten years and fibromyalgia is still difficult to diagnose. The condition is often diagnosed by ruling out other medical conditions. It is still a diagnosis with some mystery to it. However, the American College of Rheumatology has established that fibromyalgia is diagnosed by wide spread aching that lasts at least three months with tender points in at least 11 designated locations.

So what is it? Fibromyalgia is a medical condition involving an overactive inflammatory response of the connective tissue of motion such as muscles, tendons, and ligaments. This results in chronic and often reoccurring pain in the tissue affected. The pain most often affects the regions of neck and back and is often described as aching all over. In addition, fibromyalgia can often affect the upper chest, legs and arms. Some other symptoms often reported by fibromyalgia patients include numbness, headaches, tingling in feet and hands. Fibromyalgia patients often report changes in symptoms to weather changes, and in Minnesota the weather changes quite



Stay Healthy

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frequently as we all know.

Although fibromyalgia is not a life threatening condition, it can have affects that go beyond pain and affect a person's entire life. One such affect is a disturbance of sleep. Fibromyalgia sufferers often have difficulty getting comfortable and staying comfortable when their condition is acting up. This can be a major problem because sleep is when the body does most of its healing and fibromyalgia sufferers need to avoid sleep deprivation and fatigue as part of their treatment. Chronic pain also affects a person's mental health and social environment. Fibromyalgia patients often suffer from a high level of frustration and bouts of depression with

the condition resulting in difficulties at work and home. They require a lot of understanding and support from friends and family.

Currently, fibromyalgia appears to be more common in women than men. The exact causes or triggers for fibromyalgia are still a matter of theory. Fibromyalgia sufferers often suffer from a high incidence of stress, poor sleep, an increased state of decondition, and physical and emotional trauma, but the exact link to the condition is not understood. Some of the prevailing medical theories involve linking these previously stated factors with injury to the central nervous system, and/or chemical and/or hormonal changes. So to avoid fibromyalgia one should avoid stress, sleep deprivation, and stay physically active.

The treatment of fibromyalgia often involves a high level of coordinated medical treatments and often life style changes. Currently the most effective medical treatments for fibromyalgia involve: 1) Physical therapy for soft tissue mobilization and massage followed by low intensity and controlled exercise for muscle strengthening and improving cardiovascular tolerance, 2) Realignment of the back, neck, and extremities to restore normal nerve impulses through chiropractic

manipulation, 3) Physician prescribed medications for pain relief and small doses of antidepressants to restore deep sleep. The most effective lifestyle changes involve stress reduction, continued regular “low intensity” exercise, and regular sleep patterns to ensure adequate sleep.

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