



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Fibromyalgia

This information explains fibromyalgia (fie-bro-my-AL-juh), including symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.

Fibromyalgia is a condition that causes pain in your muscles, ligaments (tissue that connects bone), and tendons (tissue that connects muscles to bones).

Most people develop symptoms of fibromyalgia between the ages of 30 and 55. It's more common in females but males and children can also have this condition.

We don't know what causes fibromyalgia.

Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

The most common symptoms of fibromyalgia are pain, fatigue (feeling more tired and weak than usual), and trouble sleeping.

Pain

Fibromyalgia causes chronic pain in many areas of your body. The level of pain can vary. You may feel:

- Aching
- Tingling
- Soreness
- Throbbing
- Tenderness
- Stiffness
- Burning

The pain can get worse if you:

- Don't sleep well
- Are exposed to the cold
- Have anxiety (strong feeling of worry or fear)
- Have stress

The pain can worsen over time. Early on, you may only feel discomfort in 1 area of your body. As time goes on, you may feel it in many areas.

Other Symptoms

Many people with fibromyalgia also have:

- Sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea
- Depression (strong feelings of sadness)
- Anxiety
- Migraine headaches
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Discomfort in the abdomen (belly) and bladder
- Raynaud's disease (condition where some areas of your body, usually your fingers or toes, feel numb and cold)
- Dry eyes
- Dizziness

Diagnosing Fibromyalgia

There are no specific tests used to diagnose fibromyalgia.

Your doctor will diagnose fibromyalgia based on your symptoms and a physical exam. They may also order blood work or x-rays to rule out other possibilities of what's causing your pain.

Treatment of Fibromyalgia

- Your doctor can give you medication to treat the symptoms of fibromyalgia. This can help to decrease pain, allow you to sleep better, and improve your mood.
- Physical therapy can help decrease your symptoms. Talk with your doctor about what exercises can help you.
- Seeing a mental health professional, such as a counselor or psychiatrist, can help you deal with this condition. Therapy can also help if you're feeling anxious or depressed.
- Memorial Sloan Kettering's (MSK) Counseling Center provides counseling services that may be helpful to you. For more information or to schedule an appointment, ask your doctor or call 646-888-0200.
- Complementary therapies, such as t'ai chi, yoga, acupuncture, and massage, can help relieve your symptoms. To learn more about these therapies, contact the MSK Integrative Medicine Service at 646-888-0800.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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