



# FIBROMYALGIA

Fibromyalgia, also known as Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) is a chronic condition associated with widespread pain and fatigue. Pain can be diffuse throughout the body and is not always felt in the same place in the body. The term 'Fibromyalgia' simply means pain (algia) in the muscles (my) and tissues (fibro). It can also be accompanied by poor sleep, brain fog and anxiety and/or depression.

Fibromyalgia is more prevalent in women than men. There is also an increased risk with age, from 1% in 18-30 years to 8% in women aged 55-64.

In fibromyalgia, there is a change in the processing of information coming from the nervous system to the brain. The brain receives constant information signalling danger (even when there isn't any physical danger) from the body and the brain becomes more sensitive with lots more circulating chemicals. Essentially, this causes increased sensitivity throughout the whole body. In some cases, even light touch is painful.

People with mild to moderate Fibromyalgia symptoms can live a relatively normal and active life if symptoms are well controlled. Others may need some additional help. What is clear, is that people with Fibromyalgia experience pain differently to the general population



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## Signs And Symptoms of Back Pain

The main symptoms of fibromyalgia are pain and fatigue, but in addition to these, you may experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Unrefreshing sleep, extreme tiredness despite having slept
- Stiffness and discomfort on waking
- Increased sensitivity to touch and movement (Hyperalgesia) - you might also find that you experience pain in response to things that are not normally painful. This is called Allodynia.
- Poor memory, concentration (Fibro-fog) and clumsiness
- Headaches or migraines
- IBS (Irritable bowel syndrome) and/or irritable bladder
- Increased sensitivity to light, noise and heat - this is to do with the change in the sensitivity of the nervous system

Some people can develop other associated symptoms like:

- Anxiety and depression
- Feeling too hot or too cold
- Restless legs
- Sometimes people find their joints are more mobile (Hypermobility) which can also be painful
- Jaw pain

## Causes of Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is often triggered by a traumatic event like an accident or injury, childhood trauma, physical or emotional health problem or child birth to mention a few examples. It can also be caused without any specific trigger. There is no definitive diagnosis but the common theme remains, the brain has an altered processing of information that results in increased pain.

This alteration in processing is likely to be a result of chemical or electrical changes in the body, spinal cord and the brain causing increased sensitivity and feelings of extreme pain.

The reduction of chemicals like Serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline can contribute to a number of symptoms. As a result of a chemical change you might experience:

- A change in mood
- Sleep - it is possible that poor sleep can be a cause of fibromyalgia
- Behaviour - maybe you don't want to go out or socialise and would rather be at home
- Appetite - you may eat more, or less food in response to these hormonal changes
- Difficulty coping emotionally day to day

## Top Tips to Manage Back Pain

Unfortunately, there is no known cure for Fibromyalgia and treatments focus on managing the symptoms of pain and tiredness. It is important to address both the physical and emotional sides of Fibromyalgia to help you move forward in the best way for you.

- If you think you may have Fibromyalgia, seek help from your GP who will be able to prescribe effective pain relief.
- Medication - Over the counter medication like Paracetamol can help to manage pain but in most cases you will need to see your GP for prescription pain relief. Sometimes you will be prescribed antidepressant medication too. Some antidepressants are also used for pain relief so don't be alarmed.
- Remain Active - Gentle exercise like walking, cycling or swimming can help to keep you fit and strong.
- Physiotherapy can be helpful to develop an individual exercise plan for your particular needs. They will guide you gently, provide coping strategies and paced activity to help in a flare up.
- CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) or Counselling can help you cope and plan for the future.
- Relaxation techniques and meditation can be very useful to find calm and reduce the sensitivity of the nervous system.
- Acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy and fascial release can also help with pain, stiffness and relaxation. And craniosacral therapy can balance the nervous system.
- Sleep Hygiene - A good, consistent sleep pattern can be a very effective strategy to manage Fibromyalgia symptoms - see out 'Sleep Hygiene' self-help for more information.

## Further Support - When to seek help

For further information visit [www.toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk](http://www.toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk) or connect with us on social media.



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