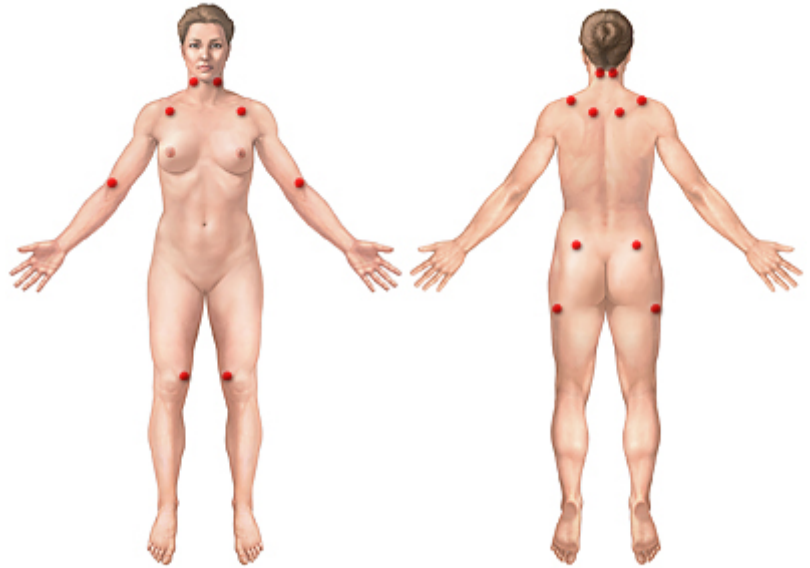


Fibromyalgia

Definition

Fibromyalgia is a condition in which a person has long-term pain that is spread throughout the body. The pain is most often linked to fatigue, sleep problems, headaches, depression, and anxiety.

People with fibromyalgia may also have tenderness in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues.



ADAM.

Alternative Names

Fibromyositis; FM; Fibrositis

Causes

The cause is not known. Researchers think that fibromyalgia is due to a problem with how the central nervous system processes pain. Possible causes or triggers of fibromyalgia include:

- Physical or emotional trauma.
- Abnormal pain response: Areas in the brain that control pain may react differently in people with fibromyalgia.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Infection, such as a virus, although none has been identified.

Fibromyalgia is more common in females as compared to males. Women ages 20 to 50 are most affected.

The following conditions may be seen with fibromyalgia or have similar symptoms:

- Long-term (chronic) neck or back pain
- Long-term (chronic) fatigue syndrome
- Depression
- Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid)
- Lyme disease
- Sleep disorders

Symptoms

Pain is the main symptom of fibromyalgia.

The areas where pain occurs are called tender points. These points are found in the soft tissue on the back of the head, neck, shoulders, chest, lower back, hips, elbows, and knees. The pain then spreads out from these areas. The qualities of the pain are:

- It may be mild to severe.
- It may feel like a deep ache, or a stabbing, burning pain.
- It may feel like it is coming from the joints, although the joints are not affected.

People with fibromyalgia tend to wake up with body pain and stiffness. For some people, pain improves during the day and gets worse at night. Some people have pain all day long.

Pain may get worse with:

- Physical activity
- Cold or damp weather
- Anxiety and stress

Most of the people with fibromyalgia have fatigue, depressed mood, and sleep problems. Many people say that they cannot get to sleep or stay asleep, and they feel tired when they wake up.

Other symptoms of fibromyalgia may include:

- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Memory and concentration problems
- Numbness and tingling in hands and feet
- Reduced ability to exercise
- Tension or migraine headaches

Exams and Tests

To be diagnosed with fibromyalgia, you must have had at least 3 months of widespread pain with one or more of the following:

- Ongoing problems with sleep
- Fatigue
- Thinking or memory problems

It is not necessary to find tender points during the exam to make a diagnosis.

Results from the physical exam, blood and urine tests, and imaging tests are normal. These tests may be done to rule out other conditions with similar symptoms. Studies of breathing during sleeping may be done to find out if you have a condition called sleep apnea.

Fibromyalgia may also occur in people who have other forms of arthritis, such as:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Osteoarthritis
- Spondyloarthritis
- Systemic lupus erythematosus

Treatment

The goals of treatment are to help relieve pain and other symptoms, and to help the person cope with the symptoms.

The first type of treatment may involve:

- Physical therapy
- Exercise and fitness program
- Stress-relief methods, including light massage and relaxation techniques

If these treatments do not work, your health care provider may also prescribe an antidepressant or muscle relaxant. Sometimes, combinations of medicines are helpful.

- The goal of these medicines is to improve your sleep and help you better tolerate pain.
- Medicine should be used along with exercise and behavior therapy.
- Duloxetine (Cymbalta), pregabalin (Lyrica), and milnacipran (Savella) are medicines that are approved specifically for treating fibromyalgia.

Other medicines are also used to treat the condition, such as:

- Anti-seizure drugs, such as gabapentin
- Other antidepressants, such as amitriptyline

- Muscle relaxants, such as cyclobenzaprine
- Pain relievers, such as tramadol

If you have sleep apnea, a device called continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) may be prescribed.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is an important part of treatment. This therapy helps you learn how to:

- Deal with negative thoughts
- Keep a diary of pain and symptoms
- Recognize what makes your symptoms worse
- Seek out enjoyable activities
- Set limits

Complementary and alternative treatments may also be helpful. These may include:

- Tai chi
- Yoga
- Acupuncture

Support groups may also help.

Things you can do to help take care of yourself include:

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Avoid caffeine.
- Practice a good sleep routine to improve quality of sleep.
- Exercise regularly. Start with low-level exercise.

Your provider may refer you to a pain clinic if your condition is severe.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Fibromyalgia is a long-term disorder. Sometimes, the symptoms improve. Other times, the pain may get worse and continue for months or years.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Call your provider if you have symptoms of fibromyalgia.

Prevention

There is no known prevention.

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