

# Fibromyalgia

## Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a chronic (long-lasting) syndrome that causes pain, tiredness and other problems. It is most common in women of childbearing age.

There is no cure for fibromyalgia, but there are treatments to help people cope with the effects of the syndrome.

## Signs and Symptoms

The main signs of the syndrome are:

- widespread muscle pain
- tiredness (fatigue)
- “tender points” — specific areas in the neck, spine, shoulders, hips or knees that are tender or painful when pressure is applied.

If you have fibromyalgia, you may have other signs and symptoms, including:

- sleep problems
- headaches, jaw pain or abdominal pain
- digestive or bladder problems
- numbness or tingling in your hands, feet or other areas
- morning stiffness
- depression or anxiety

- problems with thinking or concentrating
- reactions to smells, food, lights or noise
- other syndromes such as irritable bowel syndrome, myofascial pain syndrome or restless leg syndrome.

## Causes

The exact cause of the syndrome is unknown, but researchers point to a number of possible sources:

- an injury or trauma that affects the central nervous system
- muscle changes, such as decreased blood flow, that cause fatigue and reduced strength
- a viral or other type of infection
- changes in body chemicals.

## Diagnosing Fibromyalgia

It is difficult to diagnose fibromyalgia.

The signs and symptoms are common to many other disorders. Your health care provider will review your medical history.

Or your health care provider may follow the criteria (guidelines) of the American College of Rheumatology for diagnosing the syndrome:

- widespread pain
- tenderness in at least 11 of 18 specific tender point sites.

## **Treating Fibromyalgia**

Your health care provider will work with you to create a treatment plan that helps you cope with your symptoms.

Besides recommending that you follow a healthful diet and get enough rest, your health care provider may also suggest some or all of the following:

- low-impact aerobic exercise (swimming or walking) and strength training to improve muscle fitness and reduce pain and tenderness
- heat and massage for short-term relief of pain and stiffness
- stress reduction training.

If your symptoms continue to be severe, your provider may prescribe medicine such as anti-inflammatory pain relievers, antidepressants or muscle relaxers.