

## Fibromyalgia

**Fibromyalgia** is a rheumatic disorder characterised by chronic achy muscular pain that has no obvious physical cause. It is more common in females (up to 80-90% of cases) and often begins in young adulthood. The pain is usually described as burning, throbbing, shooting and stabbing.

The pain and stiffness can often be worse in the morning and can be accompanied by headaches, strange skin sensations and insomnia. Stiffness when walking is common.

People with fibromyalgia have an associated sleep disorder where the individual's deep sleep periods are interrupted by bouts of waking brain activity resulting in poor sleep. Not surprisingly this can result in chronic fatigue which can be quite incapacitating.

There are many more symptoms such as:

- Stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia.
- Hypothyroidism and insulin resistance.
- IBS, candida and allergies.
- Chronic fatigue.
- Poor circulation.

However, the most common feature of fibromyalgia is the *existence of certain tender points*. There are 18 specific spots where muscles are abnormally tender to the touch which clusters around the neck, shoulders, chest, knees, elbows and hips.

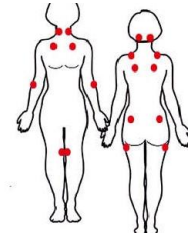
Symptoms can be triggered, or made worse, by many factors such as overexertion, stress, lack of exercise, anxiety, depression, lack of sleep, grief, trauma, extremes of temperature and infection illness.

The causes of fibromyalgia are not known and there are no tests that can certainly diagnose the condition. Some experts believe that fibromyalgia may be related to chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) which causes similar symptoms although fatigue predominates over pain in CFS.

Conventional treatment includes painkillers or antidepressants.

### Lifestyle and Dietary Management

- It is important to adopt a diet to balance blood sugar and energy production. Avoid processed foods and refined carbohydrates, caffeine, alcohol, sugar (sugar increases fatigue, pain and disturbs sleep). Eat four to five small meals daily to keep a steady supply of protein and carbohydrates available for proper muscle function.



- The diet should consist mostly of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, raw nuts and seeds, avocado, turkey or chicken and deep water fish. Include pomegranates or pomegranate juice in your diet for the anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.
- Food triggers can include nightshade vegetables (tomatoes, potatoes, aubergine, peppers, paprika, chilli peppers) and dairy foods. They contain solanine which interferes with enzymes in the muscles and may cause pain and discomfort.
- Avoid meat, dairy products, or any other foods that are high in saturated fats. Also avoid fried foods, processed foods, shellfish and white flour products.
- Drink plenty of liquids to help flush out toxins – good choices are water, herbal teas, fresh vegetable juices.
- Lemon Balm and Chamomile teas help regulate the nervous function and hyper-responsive activity of the adrenal glands.
- Consider having relaxing therapies such as reflexology, massage, acupuncture as they all help to mobilise circulation and reduce stress levels.
- A regular programme of moderate exercise is good, such as a daily walk followed by stretching exercises. Start slowly and be careful not to over-exert yourself as it can aggravate symptoms.
- Be sure to give your body plenty of rest. You need to set aside at least eight hours for sleep each night.
- A hot shower in the morning stimulates circulation and helps relieve morning stiffness. Hot baths help relax the muscles, especially if you put a good amount of Epsom Salts in the bathwater.

## Supplementation

Good quality supplements and herbal adaptogens (which are based on natural, food based ingredients) are very supportive for increasing energy production in the muscles, supporting the adrenals, improving circulation and oxygenation, reducing inflammation and improving immunity.

It is advisable to consult a naturopath or nutritional therapist to determine the best supplementation regimen for you. As a Nutritional Therapist this is something that I can help you with should you need further advice.