

The Treatment of



Fibromyalgia Syndrome

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FMS: Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Introduction and Overview

Fibromyalgia is a condition with fuzzy, undefined boundaries. There are no real tests to diagnose the problem, no medications to cure it, and it's still widely regarded in some places as a mere "it's all in your head" type of condition. What is for sure is that it involves a lot of people. When it strikes it affects them seriously and can be debilitating for many. Across the United States, the Mayo Clinic estimates that an astonishing three million to six million people suffer from Fibromyalgia. Even more alarming is the guess that 80%-90% of those affected are women.ⁱ In fact, women tend to be diagnosed with Fibromyalgia seven times more often than men.ⁱⁱ Most of these women are around childbearing age. However, adults of all ages (men and women) and even young children and teenagers can also be diagnosed with fibromyalgia. It is estimated that Fibromyalgia affects 2%-6% of the population on a global scale.ⁱⁱⁱ

Fibromyalgia literally means: painful muscles and fibrous tissue. The term is derived from several Greek and Latin words and can be translated as such: **Fibro:** fibrous tissue, **myo:** muscle and **algia:** pain.

How do I know if I have Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia has no standard blood, x-ray or laboratory test to determine its presence. In most cases patients will visit multiple doctors over a long period of time trying to find out what is wrong with them. Some individuals have lived for decades with the pain of Fibromyalgia and the frustration of not knowing what is wrong with them. Most patients know that something is amiss but can't pinpoint the problem. They hurt, they are tired, and they want to feel better.

This condition is referred to as a "diagnosis of exclusion." In other words, your doctor will listen to your symptoms, run tests which will come back negative, review your medical history, and, after all else fails and he/she can't find anything concrete wrong with you, may diagnose you with Fibromyalgia.

Well, that's the way it's been done in the past and is still carried out in many hospitals and clinics. However, with the amazingly large number of people who have come forward with this condition, a method of making a more exact, easier way to diagnose the condition has been devised.

Diagnosing Fibromyalgia

The American College of Rheumatology notes that the chronic, widespread muscular pain of Fibromyalgia can also be accompanied by:

- Fatigue
- Muscle tenderness *
- Headaches, usually chronic
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Irritable Bladder
- Cognitive and memory problems (“fibro fog”)
- TMJ disorder
- Sleep disorder
- Pelvic pain
- Restless leg syndrome
- Sensitivity to noise and temperature
- Anxiety and depression
- Numbness and tingling sensations
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

All of these symptoms may or may not be present, and to confuse matters further, they may also appear and disappear over the course of the disease. Sometimes the symptoms can be incredibly intense, while other times they are more manageable.

* **The muscle tenderness in Fibromyalgia**, however, does produce a clearer, more defining set of signs leading a practitioner to finally diagnose the condition. There are several other diseases, such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, that

have similar muscular pain pictures. The difference is that blood tests can identify these other two diseases. If the patient has Fibromyalgia, common laboratory tests will come back negative. Instead, practitioners look for muscle pain in a defined set of points accompanied by some of the symptoms listed above.

Here are the criteria now used to determine if a patient has Fibromyalgia:

A. The patient has widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body and has had this pain for a minimum of three months.

B. Of the 18 tender points that have been identified as being Fibromyalgia markers, the patient must have pain in at least 11 of them.

The 18 sites used for diagnosis cluster around the neck, shoulder, chest, hip, knee and elbow regions. Over 75 other tender points have been found to exist, but are not used for diagnostic purposes.^{iv}



*The 18 Tender Point Locations for FMS on "The Three Graces" Masterpiece.^v

In some cases a patient may have fewer than the required 11 tender muscle points. Nonetheless, when the complete medical picture is added to the fact that the patient has muscle pain in several of the points above, plus a number of the symptoms that often accompany Fibromyalgia (*see list under Diagnosing Fibromyalgia*), the diagnosis of this condition can still occur.

Finally, these points will be tender to even the slightest pressure. Most patients know something is wrong when they are chronically exhausted and fatigued, have lost all motivation to “get up and go,” and they find that they hurt all over. That’s usually when people call their doctors to tell them, “Something’s wrong.”

Differential Diagnosis

Fibromyalgia, as we have discussed, can be confused with other diseases and conditions that have similar symptoms. These medical problems include lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, thyroid disease, osteoarthritis, localized tendonitis, and connective tissue disease. Lab tests will rule out these other conditions but recent findings show that there may be one positive lab test that is correlated to Fibromyalgia. This tests looks for elevated levels of substance P.

Although it has not been completely confirmed and continues to be under investigation, many researchers are considering high levels of substance P as being one of the underlying causes of Fibromyalgia. Substance P is a neurotransmitter that transmits pain signals. When this chemical is present in higher than normal levels, pain registers in the brain at a greater altitude and at an increased frequency, more so than in individuals with regular levels of substance P. This may be why those who suffer from Fibromyalgia have pain ... and lots of it.

Discovering that a patient has Fibromyalgia and not some other condition is very important so that the correct medications, treatments, surgeries or therapies can be administered to ease the problem. It is also important to the patient for mental and emotional reasons. When an individual has a concrete name for their symptoms, (i.e., the problem is lupus or Fibromyalgia or ...) and knows that there really is something physically wrong – that it’s not just in their minds – it becomes much easier to deal with the situation and move forward.

Possible Causes of Fibromyalgia

As we've mentioned, no one is yet for sure what actually causes Fibromyalgia, even the health experts. What we will talk about in this section are simply theories and hypotheses that hopefully will one day lead researchers closer to the real answer ... and finally a cure.

Autonomic Nervous System Dysfunction - The nervous system can best be described as the central switchboard of the body. From the brain, it sends signals to various parts of the body, receives communication back from the body, and translates these incoming and outgoing signals into actions. The actions are carried out through many chemicals and hormones also known as neurotransmitters, one of which is substance P. Other vital chemicals include serotonin, norepinephrine, cortisol, growth hormone, and endorphins. These neurotransmitters help us to understand and respond to what we are seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling, hearing, thinking – things we probably all take for granted until one day they malfunction!

If anything should get in the way of normal neurotransmitter and signaling processes, a variety of problems and symptoms will manifest – including those symptoms seen with Fibromyalgia. Some researchers have suggested that disturbances or dysfunctions within the autonomic nervous system are the cause of Fibromyalgia's physical symptoms. However, the initial trigger that causes those disturbances or dysfunctions still eludes scientists.

Sleep Disorders - Even those people who don't suffer from Fibromyalgia will usually, at one time or another, have problems sleeping. Difficulties in falling asleep, restless sleep, waking often, and unrefreshing sleep are all common in our society. What's interesting, though, is that Fibromyalgia patients tend to have sleep disorders at a much larger percentage than the general population. In the beginning, health care providers labeled this as a symptom of Fibromyalgia. Then they began to wonder if, in fact, Fibromyalgia patients weren't able to sleep

because of the pain OR if the lack of sleep was actually causing the Fibromyalgia pain. Which was causing which?

When we sleep at night it gives our bodies – the cells, tissues, muscles and organs – a chance to recover, repair, and heal. For any of you who have gotten a less than optimal night of sleep in the past, you may recall feeling groggy and sore the next day. Fibromyalgia patients feel like that on a regular basis. A hypothesis that is garnering much attention is that lack of sleep due to an undiagnosed sleep disorder may be causing the pain of Fibromyalgia. When muscles are unable to repair and rest night after night, they begin to hurt – a lot! Let’s see how this theory works:

Somatomedin-C, an important hormone that is released by the body during stage 4 sleep (or the deep sleep stage) is an active component of tissue and nerve repair. Research has shown that many Fibromyalgia patients are getting less stage 4 sleep than the average healthy individual. Fewer hours of deep sleep result in less somatomedin-C, leading eventually to decreased muscle and nerve health. Over time this results in several symptoms (all of which are common to Fibromyalgia patients): increased muscle pain, mood disorders including depressions, “fibro-fog” and, of course, fatigue.

To top it off, insulin growth factor, a hormone also released during deep sleep that stimulates the production of growth hormone, will be produced at lower levels when patients are unable to attain an adequate amount of that much-needed stage 4 sleep.vi

Injury and Muscle Trauma - Of particular interest is the now-recognized fact that many Fibromyalgia sufferers have a physical trauma shortly before the onset of their first symptoms. The physical trauma can be anything major that injures muscles such as a car accident, ski fall, horseback riding fall, an injury during a sports games, etc. This theory states that physical trauma can actually do damage to the central nervous system. As we’ve seen in the above section, anything

causing the nervous system to dysfunction can have an effect on the way we feel and register pain.

Additionally, it seems that physical trauma to the neck greatly increases the chances of developing Fibromyalgia symptoms. A recent study found that people with neck injuries were 13 times more likely to develop Fibromyalgia symptoms than those with injuries sustained to the lower extremities.vii

Genetic Predisposition - Researchers are also investigating the possibility that Fibromyalgia may in some way be connected to genetics or at least influenced by them. Consider that women are at an increased risk of being diagnosed with Fibromyalgia. Could it be that there is a defective gene on the female sex chromosome or is it that females are more apt to note when they are having medical problems and to seek medical attention? Likewise, multiple cases of Fibromyalgia in the same extended family are often seen making it all the more possible that this could be a genetically linked disease.

As further understanding and cracking of the genetic code continues, these, along with so many other questions, may one day be answered.

Infectious Agents - Viruses, bacteria, and other such pathogens can cause a wide range of problems in the human body. One of these includes messing with the nervous system. As we've seen earlier, anything that causes the nervous system to malfunction can potentially lead to problems with neurotransmitters and result in Fibromyalgia-like symptoms. Some pathogens can also attack the tissues of the body causing muscle pain. There is still a lot to be researched in this area ... time will tell if there actually are undiscovered agents attacking the body and causing Fibromyalgia symptoms.

Immune System Abnormalities - Finally, many experts believe that an overactive immune system is to blame. In fact, some even consider Fibromyalgia to be a form of autoimmune disease. Because it is so closely related to chronic

fatigue syndrome as well as many rheumatic diseases and lupus – all of which have an autoimmune component – the theory deserves a great deal of attention. When the immune system turns on itself rather than foreign bodies it is called autoimmunity. An autoimmune disease is one in which the immune system attacks its own cells, muscle, tissues and organs – all of which can lead to widespread pain, fatigue, and other Fibromyalgia symptoms.

Although there is no one answer yet as to what causes Fibromyalgia, much research is being conducted across the globe to discover the truth to the disease. More than likely there is a combination of factors leading to Fibromyalgia symptoms. The body's functions are so intimately related and connected that when one small dysfunction occurs there is usually an ensuing cascade of problems. The pathway between particular dysfunctions and their conditions is what researchers are working on and from which all Fibromyalgia patients are eagerly awaiting answers.

Triggers versus Causation

Another tricky and unproved topic is that of triggers versus causes. Some experts believe that individuals may be born with the predisposition to developing Fibromyalgia (probably genetically linked). However, if the right triggering event is never experienced, then that patient will not suffer from Fibromyalgia. On the other hand, if the patient does come in contact with the trigger and/or the triggering event, they can see symptoms of Fibromyalgia developing. Let's take a few examples:

Example 1: Patient A has a genetic predisposition to developing Fibromyalgia. One day this individual suffers from a car accident (the trigger) and shortly thereafter is diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.

Example 2: Patient B has a genetic predisposition to developing Fibromyalgia. After contracting the flu one winter, the patient finds that they are also suffering

from Fibro-myalgia several months later, having never experienced these symptoms before.

As you can see, the predisposition must be there in this hypothesis, but the condition won't show itself unless a triggering event occurs. Potential triggers for Fibromyalgia include: *exposure to chemicals, toxins, viruses, and bacteria; experiencing muscle trauma, physical injury, other autoimmune diseases, and emotional stress*. Keep in mind, this hypothesis is still questionable and there are probably more triggers still unknown that are not mentioned here.

Studies show that there are close links between chronic fatigue syndrome and Fibromyalgia, as well as between multiple chemical sensitivity and Fibromyalgia. In fact, according to a recent paper in the Annals of Internal Medicine, 33% of Fibromyalgia patients also suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).^{viii}

What we are attempting to illustrate here is the complexity of this condition. There are no clear cut definitions or boundaries, no set tests for diagnosis, no actual known causes, and currently no treatments that cure all patients. What is known is that Fibromyalgia is real and that it hurts.

What Do I Do Now?

Dealing with a Recent Diagnosis of Fibromyalgia

Patients recently diagnosed with Fibromyalgia have one question in common, "What do I do now?"

If you've been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia in the near past, you're probably completely frustrated about the condition and its lack of certainty on any front. We understand. You aren't alone. The condition affects the emotional, spiritual and physical planes of a person. As you move through your journey of

finding relief, here are some tips for getting you through this difficult time of your life.

Number 1 - Stay positive. Depression is a common symptom of Fibromyalgia. For this reason, it is important to realize that this is neither a death sentence nor a condition that will necessarily affect you the rest of your life. There are therapies and healing modalities that have worked for other people to decrease their symptoms and, likewise, there is something that will help you, too.

Number 2 - Expect setbacks and rough days. Even generally happy, healthy people experience a down day here and there. Understand that with Fibromyalgia this may be more common than it used to be for you. When you have hard days, keep in mind that things will get better. The sun is always shining somewhere, it's up to us to find and bask in its warmth. Continue moving forward in your search for a treatment that is right for you.

Number 3 - Remember the good. We've all had our share of good times, great friends, awesome family members, and wonderful memories. Consider all of the good things in your life and the love that you have from your family and friends. These thoughts can get you through the rough times.

Number 4 - Join a support group. Remember that you aren't alone. There are thousands of others that are sharing your journey. Consider joining a support group where you can discuss your symptoms, talk about your frustrations and find others who can help you through the hard days ... and where you can help others through their tough times.

Number 5 - Rest without Guilt. If you need a break, whether it's for a few minutes or a day, go ahead and do it. Your body is going through a tumultuous ordeal and sometimes it needs to relax, recoup and reenergize. You need to allow yourself to do this without feeling guilty. Call in a babysitter, a housecleaner,

order out for dinner, do whatever you need to do in order to get a few moments of rest, and don't feel bad about it.

Number 6 - Never Give Up! Never giving up means staying on top of the latest research, finding and trying new healing modalities, asking questions of your health care provider, and sharing success stories with other Fibromyalgia patients. Remember that there is still so much to be discovered about Fibromyalgia – including a cure! Don't give up on yourself or the future.

Conventional Medications for Treating Fibromyalgia Symptoms

In the following sections we will discuss a host of therapies aimed at decreasing the pain associated with Fibromyalgia and possibly uncovering the root of the problem and addressing it as well. To start off, let's take a look at conventional (or allopathic) medications used for Fibromyalgia.

Sleep medication: What comes first, the sleep disorder or Fibromyalgia? Researchers aren't sure yet, but what they do know is that everyone needs a good night's rest. To help assure that patients can get their sleep, some doctors will prescribe tricyclic anti-depressants. Yes, these are normally used for depression, however they also seem to help patients sleep better, more restfully, and increase their deep sleep phase, the phase that is responsible for producing the chemicals needed by the body for muscle and nerve repair. Examples of these brand name medications are Amitril, Elavil, Sinequan, and Tofranil. Some health care providers also hypothesize that the antidepressants help to relieve muscle spasms, as well.

Antidepressants: Likewise, a second form of antidepressants falling into the SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) category are also used for Fibromyalgia patients. These include brand names such as Prozac, Celexa, Lexapro, Paxil and Zoloft. Although these medications are probably best known

for their use against depression symptoms, they seem to also offer great relief for those with sleep problems and Fibromyalgia symptoms by decreasing tiredness and improving mood.

In most cases doctors will prescribe smaller dosages of these medications for Fibromyalgia patients than would be given to those with depression. The drugs aren't necessarily targeting depression but rather they have the added effect of reducing sleep problems, improving mood and decreasing pain sensations – all wonderful news for the Fibromyalgia population.

Muscle Relaxants: As we mentioned above some of the antidepressants, especially the tricyclic variety, may help to relieve muscle spasms. There are also medications specifically made to target muscle pains. These are called muscle relaxants and include medications with brand names such as Flexeril. The medication works in a similar fashion to the tricyclic antidepressant and most patients notice an improvement not only in their Fibromyalgia muscle pain but also an improvement in their sleeping ability.

What about NSAIDs? NSAID is the short name for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. NSAIDs include aspirin and ibuprofen, and most can be obtained without a prescription. NSAIDs are sometimes used to treat minor and temporary signs of Fibro-myalgia, but since these drugs are meant to be used for inflammatory conditions, which Fibromyalgia is not, they are not very useful in the long run. Some patients use NSAIDs for short term pain relief, but the possible harmful side effects when using these drugs on a regular basis far outweighs the benefits.

Long term usage of NSAIDs can potentially result in kidney damage, has been known to raise already high blood pressure, can increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, may increase the risk of heartburn, ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding, as well as potentially initiating allergic reactions.^{ix} NSAIDs have their proper place in conventional medicine; however, complete

reliance on this form of therapy can result in many additional problems down the line. Be sure to talk to your doctor before using these medications routinely. Additionally, the use of some of the alternative and home remedies that you will read about in the following sections will hopefully allow you to either skip NSAID usage altogether or at least keep it to a minimum.

Corticosteroids: In the past, and sometimes still today, health care providers placed patients on prednisone or other corticosteroids. Most studies and patients, however, find that these drugs are ineffective as well as having the potential to produce serious side effects.^x

Corticosteroids such as prednisone offer little to no relief for Fibromyalgia patients because the condition is usually accompanied by minor to no inflammation. Some patients refer to Fibromyalgia as “arthritis of the muscles” and, in fact, Fibro-myalgia is a form of "soft-tissue" or muscular rheumatism, although inflammation is not a significant part of Fibromyalgia. Sometimes Fibromyalgia may feel like a joint disease but, rest assured, it is not a true form of arthritis and does not cause deformities of the joints.

Finally, when it comes to using conventional medications for treating Fibro-myalgia symptoms, some health care providers will prescribe several of the above- mentioned medications together hoping that the interaction of multiple drugs will bring relief to the patient. Anticonvulsants as well as mixed reuptake inhibitors are also on the list of potential drugs used to treat Fibromyalgia symptoms.

The Four Step Approach to Beating Fibromyalgia

The most logical approach to treating any disease must incorporate all aspects of the human experience: emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. As we've seen, conventional medicine doesn't usually do that, thereby prompting many patients to turn to alternative forms of therapy.

To target all these aspects, a treatment plan must be comprehensive in scope and aim at bringing balance to the entire being of the person, not simply to cure the physical symptoms. For this reason, a comprehensive Fibromyalgia treatment must be four fold: natural/home remedies, physical activities, relaxation and reflection, and diet.

Below you will find out why each of these parts of a treatment plan is so important in your recovery. The rest of this report is devoted to understanding the forms of therapy that fall within each of these four categories and how to implement them into your life.

1. Choose a home remedy or natural remedy that resonates with your symptoms and your emotions. In the next few pages you will find a whole host of different forms of alternative treatments ranging from acupuncture to hydrotherapy and from homeopathy to Power Balm!

2. Choose a type of physical exercise that you can engage in on a daily basis. As you'll note, we have mentioned quite a few in this book ... but only your imagination will limit you. You have so many choices ranging from yoga to walking to massage to gardening! Whatever it is, be sure that it includes movements that warm and stimulate the muscles and gets the blood flowing throughout the body. When the blood flows, it brings in much needed nutrients and eliminates unwanted waste from your muscles and organs.

It may be painful at first, especially if you have not moved much in quite a while. Take it slowly, one day at a time. The important thing is to not give up. Your muscles need to move. Your entire body and being will benefit once you incorporate movement into your life every day.

3. Find time to be quiet and reflect. This may include a morning walk around the block, a half hour each day to meditate or pray, a few minutes every few hours to practice deep breathing, a nap in the afternoons, etc. Anything that

allows you to relax, reconnect with your inner being, reflect on your life, and give your body a chance to reenergize will help you to feel better and hurt less. Whatever activity it is that you enjoy doing, be sure to do it each and every day. Make it part of your daily routine.

4. Diet is paramount to everyone's health and it's no different if you have Fibromyalgia. In fact, diet is probably even more important for those who are sick. Eat raw foods as much as possible, a large variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables each day, enjoy whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans and legumes. Of course, if you have food intolerances, stay away from those foods as well as eliminating all substitute sugars and MSG-containing products.

Alternative and Natural Treatments for Fibromyalgia Take Center Stage

As you've probably realized by now, there doesn't currently seem to be a sure-fire way to reduce Fibromyalgia symptoms through conventional measures. Because of this, many patients, tired of waiting for relief, have turned to natural therapies and home remedies to find an answer. In the next sections you will discover herbal medications, supplements, physical healing modalities along with mental activities that may be used to decrease your Fibromyalgia symptoms. Home remedies, its own section, have also been shown to help many people. What's important to remember is that although there is currently no "cure" for Fibromyalgia, this doesn't necessarily mean a life sentence of pain and fatigue. **There are options. Keep reading!**

Hydrotherapy: For many patients' pain there's nothing better than getting into a hot shower and feeling the aches run down the drain. To augment that hot shower, consider adding some hydrotherapy into your daily routine.

Hydrotherapy helps to decrease inflammation and soreness by encouraging the flow of blood to all areas of the body. In the process, life-giving oxygen is brought

to the cells, waste materials are exported and released from the body, and nutrients are transported to areas of the body that need them.

To practice hydrotherapy start by taking a cool to cold shower for a few minutes, after 2-3 minutes turn the water back to warm or semi-hot (don't scald yourself!). Stay under the warm water for 2-3 minutes before switching back to the cold water. Do this process one more time and be sure to end your shower on the cool cycle. Rewards from this easy-to-do therapy include increased energy, enhanced blood circulation, decreased pain, and an overall improvement in mood and attitude.

Homeopathy: This is a very gentle form of medicine that can potentially deliver excellent results. Working with a certified or licensed homeopath is your best option. However, if that is not possible, here are several homeopathic remedies which may be helpful in treating Fibromyalgia symptoms. Read through the following remedies. You may find that one of them describes you very well. Never take more than one remedy at a time and never overdose as this will probably aggravate the symptoms (the whole premise is that a little goes a long way). Simply follow the directions on the label of the remedy. You should be able to find these natural remedies at any natural health food store. (Note: The numbers and letters given below are strengths of these preparations according to the Hahnemann Homeopathic dosing practices.)

Arnica is generally prescribed for pain, tenderness, and stiffness. Take one dose of Arnica 30x or 15c, as directed on the product label, three times daily for up to three days. Arnica cream or gel can also be used topically. Follow the directions on the product label.

Bryonia helps ease pain that increases with movement and is better when resting. It also helps with the constipation. Take one dose of Bryonia 30x or 15c three times daily for up to three days.

Hypericum is useful for the unbearable prickly pain that radiates along nerve pathways, is worse with movement, and worse when touched. This remedy is especially effective for pain in the extremities. Take one dose of Hypericum 12x, 6x, 6c, or 3c three times daily for up to three days.

Rhus toxicodendron is for the individual who feels better after moving around. Take one dose of Rhus toxicodendron 30x or 9c three times daily for up to three days.^{xi}

Acupuncture: For centuries acupuncture has been used to relieve pain. To patients who suffer from the relentless body aches and painful muscle spasms of Fibromyalgia, it is a welcomed addition. At the International Association for the Study of Pain's 11th World Congress on Pain in Sydney, Australia, a study confirming the benefits of acupuncture for Fibromyalgia patients was presented. The study found that acupuncture treatment helped improve fatigue, pain, and anxiety. Although more research will be ongoing to determine the exact reasoning behind and how well acupuncture works on Fibromyalgia patients, the news is promising.^{xii}

Researchers who believe in the healing power of acupuncture reason that acupuncture stimulates certain processes in the body eventually leading to increased production of the chemicals that are normally missing or at low levels in Fibromyalgia patients. The mechanism behind its benefits is not well understood at this point, but to those who have been helped by acupuncture, the reason why it works really doesn't matter!

Most studies and patients have confirmed, however, that the results are not long term. Once the acupuncture treatments are halted most patients begin to experience a reappearance of symptoms again after approximately four months. We have to remember that there is no "cure" yet for Fibromyalgia. For this

reason, if acupuncture works to provide you relief you will probably end up having regular sessions for an extended period of time.

Body Work: This category of healing, labeled body work, encompasses chiropractic work, massage therapy, craniosacral therapy, orthobionomy, and many more alternative healing modalities. It is extremely helpful for a variety of reasons. As we discussed earlier, Fibromyalgia is sometimes triggered by stressful emotional or physical events. Body work aims to understand how those incidents are translated into a disease with physical manifestations and then to correct the underlying problems.

Body work usually focuses on the misalignments and dysfunctions of the physical body as well as the emotional problems and situations that the patient is dealing with. Sometimes a patient won't even know they have emotional issues as they are completely hidden away so as not to be dealt with. In order for emotional trauma to be healed it has to be brought into the open and faced. Body work is aimed at, literally, "the whole person – body, mind and spirit." Although this form of therapy is not for everyone (it can be physically and mentally exhausting and grueling and may take weeks, months or even years to find a resolution) it can be very helpful and healing for some individuals. This approach can be rationalized as a new lifestyle – a new way of living while managing your disease.

If you feel that your Fibromyalgia was triggered by such an event, check around your local area for certified practitioners of body work and give it a try. What do you have to lose other than your pain?

Home Remedies for Fibromyalgia

Seeing as there is no sure cure for Fibromyalgia, most patients have made the decision to take at least part of their health into their own hands. In most cases, patients employ the knowledge of their physician to guide them through

the maze of medication options, and then branch off on their own to try some of the alternative healing modalities. In other cases, patients choose to directly jump into their own healing process by implementing alternative treatments and home remedies like the ones you'll find in this section.

Regardless of your plan, be sure to always include the four steps that we talked about earlier – each step is important in the healing process (Natural/Home remedy, Physical Exercise, Relaxation Techniques, and Diet).

Some of the not-so-common methods that we found in our research are listed below. We consider these to be “home remedies” and they have helped other patients to get rid of their pains and symptoms associated with Fibromyalgia. Although these home remedies have not been tested or validated by the medical community, they do present anecdotal evidence that have helped many people. Here are the most common home remedies for Fibromyalgia:

1. Power Balm is an all-natural pain relief sold by Gateway Pharmacy in Kernersville, NC, said to help relieve the pain of Fibromyalgia and arthritic conditions, among others. Power Balm claims to be all-natural with an herbal blend that includes white camphor, eucalyptus oil, lavender, peppermint oil, and black pepper oil. One happy Fibromyalgia customer says, “Power Balm’s all natural pain relief is the most effective pain reliever I’ve used since the recall of Vioxx. I now have no pain.”^{xiii}

Does it really work? I guess the only way to know is to try it. Many of the herbs that are used in the product are known for relieving muscle pain so it seems completely possible. www.powerbalm.com

2. Magnesium malate is another home remedy that Fibromyalgia patients claim helps to relieve the pain. The tablets or capsules must be taken every day. If you recall, we found that many practitioners give magnesium supplements to their patients so this home remedy also seems very plausible.

Getting The Muscles Moving – Physical Activity

Physical Exercise: One of the most effective alternative and natural approaches to solving sleep problems, as well as improving mood and reducing muscle pain, is regular physical exercise. Physical exercise stimulates the production and release of many of the necessary chemicals that may be lacking in those with Fibromyalgia, including endorphins, growth hormone, and other muscle repairing chemicals.

Try to walk, run, bike, swim, garden, or anything that gets you moving and increases your heart rate for at least 20-30 minutes at a time, each day, to decrease your Fibromyalgia symptoms. Some days may seem more difficult than others when your muscles are aching and you are exhausted. But, give it a shot; more than likely you will be very glad that you did once you are finished. If you haven't exercised recently be sure to speak to your health care provider first and then start off gradually, allowing your body to adjust to the new movements.

Yoga: You're probably well aware of the benefits of yoga, after all you hear about it on a regular basis on the news, radio, in books, magazines, and on the Internet. But, did you know that yoga can also help Fibromyalgia symptoms? Yoga is helpful in experiencing a deep sense of relaxation and calmness; it helps patients to better cope with the pain, the uncertainty, the fear and the frustration of the condition. Deep breathing brings increased levels of oxygen into the body, giving the cells exactly what they need to function at their best. The stretching associated with yoga aids in getting rid of muscle tension and fatigue and brings new clarity to the mind.

Depression, sadness, restlessness and fear can all be decreased through regular practice of yoga. Sleeping disorders have also been known to improve through yoga practice, another problem associated with Fibromyalgia. You can

easily learn how to begin yoga through books, tapes, videos, and health/fitness classes at your local gym or fitness center.

Massage: The gentle manipulation of the muscle through massage can greatly help those suffering from Fibromyalgia. Because there is so much pain associated with the condition, a gentle and light manipulation of the tissue and muscle may be just what you need on a regular basis. (Resist the urge to ask the therapist to “go deep”!) Choose a massage therapist who has worked with Fibromyalgia patients in the past for best results. Chemically, massage stimulates the body to produce the molecules it needs to keep pain to a minimum in addition to improving the quality and quantity of sleep for patients.

Relaxation and Rejuvenation in Fibromyalgia

Practicing daily activities that allow your body and mind to relax is paramount. As we noted earlier, a daily early morning or late evening walk, a regular nap in the afternoons, deep breathing every few hours, or meditation practice each day – all of these activities will boost your energy level and will aid in decreasing your pain, fatigue and depression. Although yoga is not discussed in this section (it can be found under the Physical Activity section), it will also work for your relaxation/rejuvenation exercise.

Breathing Techniques: There are many ways to practice breathing techniques, but the most common form is to use deep breathing in conjunction with imagery. Below you will find one such method taken from Patricia S. Barkley at the Central Kentucky Technical College Adult Ed. Program:

Stand erect with feet shoulder-width apart, arms and hands relaxed downward, body relaxed as if it were anchored to the ground through feet and to the sky from top of the head, shoulders slightly forward and eyes closed. Focus on lower abdomen (belly) and imagine a small balloon in that space; breathe in slowly and deeply through nostrils, imagining the balloon inflating slowly; hold a

few seconds; slowly exhale through mouth, imagining the balloon gently deflating; repeat 10 or more times. See how different your body feels. Are you more relaxed? Do you feel lighter? Dizzy? Great?! This is an exercise to practice several times a day, even while sitting at a red light (especially during rush hour!), and soon the body will develop the habit. Then, when stress (or pain, or depression, or anything else that makes you feel uncomfortable) threatens, the body will automatically go into the relaxation mode. xiv

Meditation: Meditation and prayer have been used for centuries to induce healing and calmness to the body and mind. Fibromyalgia patients will find it extremely soothing and hopefully will see decreased levels of pain with regular practice. Here are two such meditations, although there are literally thousands of different ways to practice this therapy. xv And never underestimate the power of prayer.

Mindful Meditation

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place. Sit in a chair or on the floor with your head, neck and back straight but not stiff. Try to put aside all thoughts of the past and the future and stay in the present.
2. Become aware of your breathing, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Feel your belly rise and fall, the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth. Pay attention to the way each breath changes and is different.
3. Watch every thought come and go, whether it be worry, fear, anxiety, or hope. When thoughts come up in your mind, don't ignore or suppress them, but simply note them, remain calm and use your breathing as an anchor.
4. If you find yourself getting carried away in your thoughts, observe where your mind went off to, without judging, and simply return to your breathing. Remember not to be hard on yourself for not being able to completely empty your mind.

5. As the time comes to a close, sit for a minute or two, becoming aware of where you are. Get up gradually.

Relaxation Response

1. Find a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position. Try to relax your muscles.
2. Choose a word or phrase that has special meaning to you and makes you feel peaceful. Or you can try the words "Ham Sah," a Sanskrit mantra meaning "I am that."
3. As you breathe in, slowly produce the sound "hammm" as if you are sinking into a hot bath. As you exhale, slowly produce the sound "saah," which should feel like a sigh.
4. Breathe slowly and naturally. Inhale through your nose and pause for a few seconds. Exhale through your mouth, again pausing for a few seconds.
5. Don't worry about how well you are doing and don't feel bad if thoughts or feelings intrude. Simply say to yourself "Oh well," and return to your repetition.
6. As the time comes to a close, continue to be aware of your breathing but sit quietly. Becoming aware of where you are, slowly open your eyes and get up gradually.

Let Food Be Your Medicine and Medicine Be Your Food: Using Diet to Treat Fibromyalgia Symptoms

Diet: Can diet modifications help Fibromyalgia symptoms? A study published in the Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology in 2000 says, yes! For three months, eighteen women adhered to a strict low-salt, vegan, uncooked diet which consisted mainly of raw vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds, mushrooms, cereals and cooked legumes plus a supplemental dose of vitamin B12. At the end of three

months, the group following the living food diet had a significant decrease in pain, slept better, and had less morning stiffness.^{xvi}

Although the study was small and more research is underway, the results are very promising! Still, there is no one particular diet that has been proven to eliminate symptoms in Fibromyalgia patients. There have been, however, some books and papers published by various sufferers of the condition who advocate other forms of simple dietary changes to overcome symptoms of the disease. Here, for example, is a list of foods and activities that Mary Moeller and Joe Elrod provide in their *The Fibromyalgia Nutrition Guide* that should be avoided at all costs to reduce fatigue, overcome excess stress on the adrenal glands, enhance sleep patterns and reduce other Fibromyalgia symptoms:

- High fat dairy foods
- White sugar and white flour
- Fried foods
- Preservatives, junk food, and salt
- Red meat (especially salt cured, cured bacon, smoked, or nitrate cured)
- Coffee and caffeinated teas
- Colas, soda pop, and carbonated beverages
- Liquid with your meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- All forms of tobacco
- Prolonged periods of direct sun exposure
- Nutrasweet and saccharine^{xvii}

Many authors and researchers have suggested that a low-fat diet which has little or no additives, artificial flavorings, colorings and preservatives, fake sugars or sugar substitutes will help to decrease muscle pain. If you think that your diet may be affecting your symptoms, consider keeping a diet journal. Write down everything that you eat for several weeks to a few months. After you eat also keep

note of how you feel during the next few hours. Is the pain worse or better? Do you feel more tired or energized? Were you able to sleep better at night?

By keeping track of how you feel and how that relates to what you are eating, you may end up pinpointing some “culprit foods” or foods that trigger your symptoms to worsen.

Some Fibromyalgia patients have noted allergies or strong reactions to foods with high sugar content (like carbonated drinks and milk chocolate), to foods that are high in acid (eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes), red meat, milk and other dairy products, products with white flour, and packaged foods containing high levels of sugar (high fructose corn syrup is often at the top of the list of ingredients). If you find a similar pattern, remove these food items from your diet! Keep track of how you feel over the next several weeks without these foods in your diet.

Phyllis Balch, well known co-author of Prescription for Nutritional Healing, recommends a 50% raw diet with plenty of freshly squeezed vegetable and fruit juices – the diet is similar to the one found in the initial study we mentioned earlier – in addition to advocating skinless turkey or chicken, and deep-water fish to supplement the body with the building blocks needed to renew energy and build the immune system.^{xviii}

Herbal Supplements: In the same vein as dietary changes, the addition of herbal supplements can enhance energy levels, balance brain and nervous system chemicals, decrease fatigue, lower muscle aches, and improve function of the immune system – all things needed by Fibromyalgia patients. Let’s take a peek at some of these herbs.

Strengthening the immune system: Try astragalus or echinacea, burdock root tea, dandelion tea, or red clover tea. Echinacea has been shown to increase white blood cell levels, which are immune components. The teas mentioned

above are not only great for the immune system, but are also blood cleansers and strengthening aids for various glands and organs throughout the body.

Improving sleep: Skullcap and valerian root. These two herbs are best used in tea form as the hot water in tea will also soothe the mind and body before heading to bed. If nightmares are what's ruining your quality of sleep, try making a tea of catnip! Hospice nurses often recommend catnip tea for their patients who suffer nightmares as a result of prolonged use of palliative morphine. If you aren't a tea drinker you can try these herbs in pill or powder form as well.

Relieving pain: Teas of white willow bark, boswellia (helpful in relieving morning stiffness and joint pain); topical application of creams containing capsicum (cayenne powder) massaged into aching joints or muscles. Capsicum is used in arthritic conditions to relieve aches and pains.

***NOTE:** Always speak to your primary care physician before starting an herbal supplement, ESPECIALLY if you have any other medical conditions, are currently taking any other prescriptions, nonprescription drugs, or herbal preparations, or if you are pregnant.*

Nutritional/Dietary Supplements: Charles Lapp, M.D., is nationally recognized and sought after as a medical consultant regarding chronic fatigue syndrome and Fibromyalgia. Dr. Lapp is a board member of the American Fibromyalgia Syndrome Association, among many other impressive credentials. For those interested in what he is currently working on in the field of Fibromyalgia and treatment visit his website at: <http://www.drlapp.net/>

Here is what he has to say regarding nutritional supplements for Fibromyalgia:

The literature confirms several deficiencies in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia, including intracellular magnesium and vitamin B-12, whole body potassium, intracellular ATP,

glutathione, taurine, serine, and the short-chain fatty acids such as valine, leucine, and isoleucine. While patients may not feel any better by supplementing these, health can at least be optimized. I frequently recommend supplementation with a multi-vitamin (like Super Multiple II or Cellular Support), magnesium, potassium, NADH (for ATP), glutathione, and an amino acid capsule.^{xix}

Mark J. Pellegrino, M.D., is one of the nation's leading experts on Fibromyalgia and, in addition to multiple articles and books that he has authored on the topic, he has personal experience as a Fibromyalgia sufferer himself. In his practice, he has treated and cared for thousands of Fibromyalgia patients. Here is what Dr. Pellegrino says on the topic of nutritional supplementation:

I often recommend a diet that is higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates to help Fibromyalgia. A variety of nutritional supplements can also be used to help the symptoms of Fibromyalgia. Magnesium with malic acid, 5-HTP, colostrum and others can be beneficial. Many people who are too sensitive to prescribed medicines may better tolerate nutritional supplements.

The research supports that those with Fibromyalgia have low or below normal levels of magnesium, thyroid, growth hormone, B-12 levels and serotonin, among others. If low or below normal deficiencies are identified, I recommend specific supplementation. For fatigue, I often recommend supplements that include magnesium and malic acid, colostrum, and NADH, among others.^{xx}

Currently a study is being conducted by the Mayo Clinic to ascertain whether soy supplementation is helpful in eliminating or decreasing Fibromyalgia symptoms. To read more about the status of this study and the final outcome visit: www.clinicaltrials.gov/ct/show/NCT00279942.

In summary, there are a large number of experts, each with somewhat different advice, that use dietary supplementation as part of their Fibromyalgia treatment strategy. Overall, it seems that most practitioners have found supplementation with magnesium and B vitamins, particularly with vitamin B12, helpful for decreasing Fibromyalgia symptoms. There is still plenty to be researched in this large category of medicine and one of the more recent supplements that have caught many researchers' eyes is SAME.

SAMe, short for S-adenosylmethionine, is a vital component of billions of chemical reactions in the human body on a continual basis. Its main function is in methylation reactions and aiding in the production of adequate quantities of several neurotransmitters needed by the body. Looking at the big picture, SAMe is paramount in promoting cell repair and cell growth leading researchers to believe that this molecule could help in decreasing muscle pain, depression and fatigue. Studies are under way and further research will determine whether this supplement should be added to the list of helpful treatments as well.

Living Your Life to Its Fullest

Although you won't find these remedies in a vitamin bottle, as a prescribed medication, or at the food store, most individuals who suffer from Fibromyalgia have discovered that by following a regular exercise program, reducing stress levels, creating a positive environment, and displaying an uplifting and optimistic attitude their life can be good and fulfilling despite their diagnosis.

Fibromyalgia hurts – there's no denying that. But, as the saying goes, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. The same is true for diseases without a current cure – you have to do the best you can. As we've said earlier, you will have bad days and you will have good days – the goal is to have more good than bad ones!

Be sure to surround yourself with positive, happy people who understand and can sympathize with your feelings and pain. Remember to give yourself a break when you need it and, above all, never give up hope that a cure will one day be discovered.

END NOTES

- ⁱ MayoClinic.com – www.mayoclinic.com/health/fibromyalgia/DS00079
- ⁱⁱ American College of Rheumatology – www.rheumatology.org/public/factsheets/fibromya-new.asp
- ⁱⁱⁱ National Sleep Foundation - www.sleepfoundation.org/sleeptionary/
- ^{iv} Fibromyalgia Network – www.fmnetnews.com/pages/criteria.html
- ^v Fibromyalgia Network – www.fmnetnews.com/pages/criteria.html
- ^{vi} Fibromyalgia Symptoms – www.fibromyalgia-symptoms.org/fibromyalgia_sd.html
- ^{vii} PubMed - Increased rates of fibromyalgia following cervical spine injury. A controlled study of 161 cases of traumatic injury. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
- ^{viii} Immune Support – www.immunesupport.com/library/showarticle.cfm/id/4743
- ^{ix} WebMD – www.webmd.com/content/article/113/110960.htm
- ^x Fibromyalgia – www.emedicine.com/pmr/topic47.htm
- ^{xi} Fibromyalgia Holistic Online – www.holistic-online.com/Remedies/cfs/fib_homeopathy.htm
- ^{xii} WebMD – www.webmd.com/content/Article/110/109696.htm – International Association for the Study of Pain's 11th World Congress on Pain, Sydney, Australia, Aug. 21-26, 2005.
- ^{xiii} My Home Remedies – www.myhomeremedies.com
- ^{xiv} Stress reduction: Deep breathing techniques – www.slincs.coe.utk.edu/gtelab/learning_activities
- ^{xv} Two Methods of Meditation – www.altmedicine.about.com/cs/mindbody/a/Meditation.htm
- ^{xvi} Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology 2000:29(5),308-13 www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
- ^{xvii} The Fibromyalgia Nutrition Guide – www.immunesupport.com/library

^{xviii} Prescription for Nutritional Healing by Phyllis A. Balch and James F. Balch, Avery, 2000.

^{xix} Fibromyalgia Support – www.fibromyalgiasupport.com

^{xx} Fibromyalgia Support - www.fibromyalgiasupport.com
<http://www.fibromyalgiasupport.com/Fibromyalgia.cfm/id/5304>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR FIBROMYALGIA

Web Information on Fibromyalgia

Broad overview of fibromyalgia.

www.immunesupport.com/fibromyalgia-understanding.htm

Overview of fibromyalgia with emphasis on symptoms.

www.fibromyalgia-symptoms.org/fibromyalgia_sd.html

Overview of fibromyalgia by Web MD.

www.webmd.com/diseases_and_conditions/fibromyalgia.htm

Medline overview of fibromyalgia with links to other major fibromyalgia websites and resources.

www.search.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/

Role of autoimmunity in fibromyalgia.

www.immunesupport.com/library/showarticle.cfm/ID/5549/e/1/T/CFIDS_FM./

Role of toxin exposure in fibromyalgia

www.immunesupport.com/library/showarticle.cfm/id/4743

10 Strategies to Maintaining a Positive Attitude

www.fmaware.org/patient/coping/positive_attitude.htm

Home remedies for fibromyalgia by Web MD:

www.webmd.com/hw/fibromyalgia_cfids/hw196498.asp

Fibromyalgia support groups

www.fibrohugs.com

www.immunesupport.com/supportgroups/

www.fibro-friends.org

www.boards.webmd.com/

Books on Fibromyalgia

From Fatigued to Fantastic!: A Proven Program to Regain Vibrant Health Based on a New Scientific Study Showing Highly Effective Treatment for Chronic Fatigue and Fibromyalgia, Jacob Teitelbaum, Act (Editor), August 2001

Living with Fibromyalgia: Four Steps to Manage Pain and Lead a Fulfilling Life
Dean L. Mondell, Patti Wright, April 2005

What Your Doctor May Not Tell You about Fibromyalgia: The Revolutionary Treatment That Can Reverse the Disease, R. Paul St Amand, Claudia Craig Marek, January 2006

Fibromyalgia: An Essential Guide for the Newly Diagnosed, Claudia Marek, Mari Florence, Foreword by R. Paul St. Armand, Foreword by R. Paul Amand, April 2003

Fibromyalgia: Simple Relief through Movement, Stacie L. Bigelow, January 2000

The Fibromyalgia Nutrition Guide

Joe M. Elrod, Mary Moeller, January 1999

Living Well with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia: What Your Doctor Doesn't Tell You...That You Need to Know, Mary J. Shomon, March 2004

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Fibromyalgia

Lynne Matallana, Laurence A. Bradley, Muhammad Yunus, Stuart Silverman, June 2005

Fibromyalgia For Dummies

Roland Staud, With Christine Adamec, September 2002

Fibromyalgia Cookbook: More than 120 Easy and Delicious Recipes, Shelley Ann Smith, Alison Bested, April 2002

Water Exercises for Fibromyalgia: The Gentle Way to Relax and Reduce Pain, Ann A. Rosenstein, Foreword by Ruth Sova, February 2006

Fibromyalgia Handbook: A 7-Step Program to Halt and Even Reverse Fibromyalgia
Harris H. McIlwain, Debra Fulghum, Debra Fulghum Bruce, February 2003

Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Seven Proven Steps to Less Pain and More Energy, Fred Friedberg, Foreword by Jacob Teitelbaum, June 2006