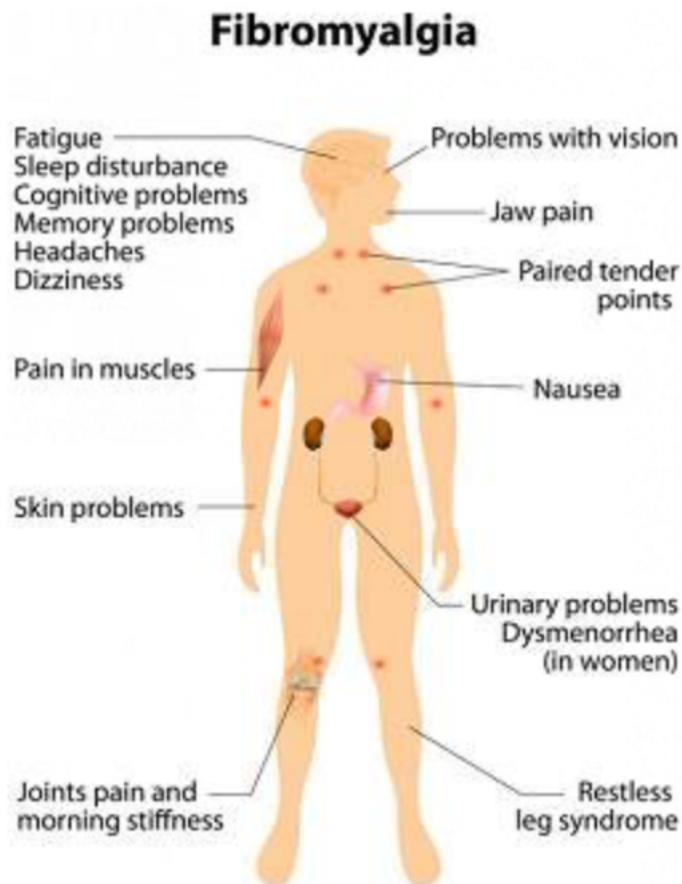


**Fibromyalgia** is a chronic pain disorder that affects millions of Americans each year—primarily women—and can be both physically and emotionally distressing. Fibromyalgia comes from the Latin term for fibrous tissue (fibro) and the Greek words for muscle (myo) and pain (algia). Indeed, fibromyalgia sufferers experience widespread chronic muscle pain. People with fibromyalgia also report having sleep disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, and migraines.



Fibromyalgia is a widespread chronic pain disorder that affects many different areas and functions of the body.

Fibromyalgia is often characterized by pain in multiple tender points. These tender points are sometimes confused with trigger points, which are associated with chronic myofascial pain. The primary difference between tender points and trigger points is that trigger points can produce referred pain (that is, they can cause pain in other parts of the body).

Making things all the more confusing is that chronic myofascial pain often accompanies fibromyalgia, so it's possible that you may experience pain from tender points (due to fibromyalgia) and trigger points (due to chronic myofascial pain).

The fibromyalgia tender points are symmetrical; they occur on both sides of the body. The trigger point locations are:

- Front lower sides of your neck

- Upper chest
- Inner elbows
- Just above inner knees
- Back of your head
- Top of the shoulders
- Upper back (at shoulder blades)
- Upper buttock
- Hips

These tender points are very small—the size of a penny. All of them are around joints, but fibromyalgia pain has nothing to do with the joints themselves. Instead, fibromyalgia pain affects the soft tissues of your body, mainly the muscles.

These tender points are not the only places it's possible to feel fibromyalgia pain; you can also have general muscle fatigue and widespread chronic pain.

When it comes to tender points, it's important to understand that fibromyalgia is not a consistent syndrome. What that means is that you may feel intense pain in some areas one day and in other areas the next. (Fortunately, there are days when you may not even experience pain at all.)

#### **What are the symptoms of fibromyalgia?**

Chronic widespread pain is the most common symptom of fibromyalgia. However, patients typically experience multiple symptoms, such as localized pain and extreme fatigue. Many people with fibromyalgia also have problems sleeping and anxiety and/or depression.

#### **What other conditions "co-exist" with fibromyalgia?**

- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Irritable bladder
- Migraine headaches
- Raynaud's Syndrome
- Restless legs syndrome
- TMJ or Temporomandibular joint disorder

#### **What causes fibromyalgia?**



Doctors have yet to determine fibromyalgia's exact cause, though research findings are shedding light on the condition. Possible causes include abnormalities in the endocrine and autonomic nervous systems, genetics, muscle tissue abnormalities, and abnormal blood flow.

Like many disorders, it's quite possible that fibromyalgia does not simply have one cause; rather, many factors may impact your likelihood of developing the condition.

### **What are some treatment options to deal with fibromyalgia?**

The type of treatment you'll need will depend on your symptoms. If you're stressed or have trouble sleeping, an exercise program will help.

### **Fibromyalgia Treatments**

Fibromyalgia is a mysterious disorder, but there are many treatment options available to help reduce your symptoms. The articles below highlight a variety of treatments that may relieve your chronic pain and fatigue.

### **Medications for Fibromyalgia**

There are a variety of drugs and medications available to treat your fibromyalgia symptoms—symptoms such as chronic pain, fatigue, depression, and sleep disorders. However, medications won't cure the disorder. The FDA has approved three medications to treat fibromyalgia—pregabalin (marketed as Lyrica), duloxetine (Cymbalta), and milnacipran (Savella). However, they are not your only options. Anti-depressants, muscle relaxants, and over-the-counter medications may also reduce your pain.

### **Alternative Treatments for Fibromyalgia**

Many patients achieve fibromyalgia pain relief from complementary and alternative medicines (CAM). Acupuncture, biofeedback, and massage are popular treatments. Herbal supplements and meditation may also provide chronic pain relief and reduce your fatigue.

### **Exercise for Fibromyalgia**

Your chronic pain and fatigue may make exercising seem unbearable, but exercise will likely be an essential part of fibromyalgia treatment. Physical activity reduces symptoms such as fatigue, depression, and will even help you sleep better. Developing an exercise program that's effective is an essential part of managing your symptoms.

### **Physical Therapy for Fibromyalgia**

You may want to try physical therapy to manage your fibromyalgia symptoms. Passive treatments, such as heat and cold therapy, massage, and ultrasound, will reduce chronic and acute muscle pain. Active treatments, including core stability and muscle flexibility exercises, will strengthen muscles and help relieve pain.

### **Counseling for Fibromyalgia**

A significant portion of fibromyalgia sufferers experience some sort of mood disorder, typically depression and/or anxiety. Taking care of your mental and emotional health is a key component to reducing your fibromyalgia symptoms.

### **Rest Better (and Sleep Better) to manage Fibromyalgia**



A majority of people with fibromyalgia have trouble getting a good night's rest. Regardless of your specific sleep problem, sleep issues worsen your fibromyalgia pain and fatigue. This article explains why sleep is important and includes tips on achieving a quality night's rest.

**Stress Management for Fibromyalgia**

There is a connection between stress and pain. In fact, researchers have found that people with fibromyalgia are more susceptible to stress than those who don't have the condition. This article overviews the importance of reducing stress and ways to do so.

**Read more about fibromyalgia at [spineuniverse.com](http://spineuniverse.com)**