



FIBROKNOWLEDGE

LIVING WITH FIBROMYALGIA

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YOU CAN ACTIVELY WORK TO REDUCE YOUR FIBROMYALGIA SYMPTOMS

Life with fibromyalgia can be a challenge. But you can take steps to proactively manage your health—and your life. Action is empowering.

Your doctor is your most important resource. Work closely with your doctor and talk about which steps might help you find fibromyalgia pain relief. You have options such as lifestyle changes, support groups, and medication.

SOME LIFESTYLE CHANGES MAY HELP YOU FIND FIBROMYALGIA PAIN RELIEF

EXERCISE

A healthy and active lifestyle may help decrease your fibromyalgia symptoms. Studies show that second to medication, the actions most likely to help are light aerobic exercises (such as walking or water exercise to get your heart rate up) and strength training. But always check with your doctor before you start any exercise program.

These tips from the National Fibromyalgia Association may help you get started:

- ✔ Start slow. If you're moving more today than yesterday, that's progress
- ✔ Listen closely to your body. It's important not to overdo it. Don't increase your activity too quickly
- ✔ Start with just a few minutes of gentle exercise a day. Then work your way up
- ✔ Walking is a great form of exercise
- ✔ Track your progress. Note the exercise you're doing and how you feel, both during and afterward
- ✔ Stretch your muscles before and after exercise
- ✔ Post-exercise soreness will decrease over time. But respond to your body's signals and pace yourself

SLEEP

If you find that you are sleeping poorly, you're not alone. With fibromyalgia, pain and poor sleep happen in a circle. Each worsens the other. Fortunately, there is a lot you can do to help yourself sleep better. The National Fibromyalgia Association, the National Pain Foundation, the National Sleep Foundation, and other expert organizations recommend the following steps to help people sleep:

- ✔ Stick to a sleep schedule. If you go to bed at the same time every night, your body will get used to falling asleep at that time. So choose a time and stay with it, even on weekends
- ✔ Keep it cool. When a room is too warm, people wake up more often and sleep less deeply. According to the National Sleep Foundation, studies show that you're likely to sleep better in a room that's on the cool side. So try turning down the thermostat and/or keeping a fan on hand

- ✓ As evening approaches, cut out the caffeine. Caffeine has a wake-up effect that lasts. It's best to avoid it well before bedtime. That includes not just coffee, but also tea, colas, and chocolate
- ✓ Avoid alcohol before bed. That "nightcap" may make you sleepy at first. But as your blood alcohol levels drop, it has the opposite effect. You may find yourself wide awake
- ✓ Exercise in the afternoon. Afternoon exercise may help you sleep more deeply. But exercising before bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep
- ✓ Nap if you need to, but be brief. If you're so tired that you must take a nap, set the alarm for twenty minutes. Snooze any longer and you may have trouble falling asleep at night
- ✓ Make your room a relaxing refuge. Treat yourself to comfortable bedclothes and snuggly pajamas. A white-noise machine or fan may help you fall asleep to a soothing background sound
- ✓ Develop a relaxing bedtime routine. Reading helps some people fall asleep. So does listening to soft music. Do whatever works for you. But try to follow the same routine every night to signal your body that it's time for sleep

FIBROMYALGIA DIET

So what about your diet? There's a lot of information on the Internet about "fibromyalgia diets." But many researchers say there is no perfect eating plan for fibromyalgia pain relief. Talk to your doctor about what is right for your needs and your lifestyle. Let your doctor know if you have eliminated any foods from your diet. Also, be sure to tell your doctor if you are taking any nutritional supplements. They can possibly interact with any medications you may be taking.

IN ADDITION TO YOUR PHYSICAL NEEDS, CONSIDER YOUR EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Learning to cope with fibromyalgia can be a challenge. Good emotional support can help. Try reaching out to family and friends. It's also important to work closely with a healthcare professional who understands your condition.

However, fibromyalgia can be hard to understand. Your friends and family may not always know what you are going through. Even members of the healthcare system may not be as sensitive as you may wish. Maybe the support you need has been lacking.

There are certain feelings, frustrations, and successes that only someone else with fibromyalgia can identify with. Reach out to others who have walked in similar shoes. Let your loved ones and others with fibromyalgia help you along the way.

- ✓ Support groups exist all over the country, as well as online.
- ✓ Support groups can help you connect to others with fibromyalgia and chronic pain
- ✓ You can also learn more about fibromyalgia
- ✓ You can get ideas about ways to manage it and become closer to your friends and family

All of this may help you better manage your fibromyalgia.

Another helpful skill is stress management. Stress plays a big role in how you respond to different situations, both physically and emotionally. Stress can have a significant impact on your ability to do the things that are important to you.

There are many different stress management techniques to try that are easy to learn such as

- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Deep breathing
- ✓ Visualization exercises

You can also simply allow yourself time each day to relax. That may mean learning how to say no without feeling guilty. But it's important to stay active and keep to a routine you can manage.

A type of therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy has also been found to be helpful. Studies show it can reduce pain severity and improve function. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps us see how our thoughts affect how we feel and what we do.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA AND CHRONIC WIDESPREAD PAIN CAN BE FOUND AT FIBROCENTER.COM